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American Bookmen

Sketches, Chiefly Biographical,
of Certain Writers of the
Nineteenth Century

By

M. A. DeWolfe Howe

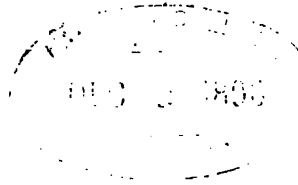


New York

Dodd, Mead and Company

1898

AL 118.98A



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TO
E. W. H.

♪

PREFACE

THE more clearly a book speaks for itself, the less it needs a preface. It is the writer's hope, therefore, that his readers will discover, without recourse to these few words, what he has tried to do. They are intended rather to give to those who would be saved the trouble of reading, fair warning that he has not attempted to throw entirely new light upon themes already thrice familiar, or to deliver himself in terms of ultimate criticism. His purpose has been to bring together from many sources some of the more interesting facts in the lives of the men with whom he has been concerned, and in the spirit of Montaigne, interpreted in Florio's version of his opening words, "Loe here a well-meaning book," to present these facts primarily as a narrator, incidentally as a critic. The scant mention of such men as Motley and Thoreau, and the entire omission from biographical record of names like

those of George William Curtis, Bayard Taylor and a score of others will suggest the obvious fact that no effort has been made to give a complete account of American writers.

It is hardly to be hoped that all errors have been avoided, in spite of the pains to escape them. Especially in defining the portraits has it been difficult, in some cases, to arrive at absolute certainty; and the writer will be grateful for any information which may help him to do so.

The publishers and the author would express their common sense of obligation to the following persons and firms for the use of portraits and other illustrations, which may prove of greater value than the written word in giving reality to scenes and faces: Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, James Kirke Paulding, Esq., Henry C. Sturges, Esq., F. H. Day, Esq., Miss Amelia Poe, John Prentice Poe, Esq., Mrs. Annie Nathan Meyer, W. L. Sawyer, Esq., Messrs. D. Appleton & Co., Messrs. Fords, Howard & Hulbert, Messrs. Little, Brown & Co., W. E. Benjamin, Esq., Horace L. Traubel, Esq., and Messrs. Small, Maynard & Co.

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To Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. in particular must acknowledgment be made for their most generous permission to reproduce a large number of portraits which have originally appeared in books published by them.

BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND,

September, 1898.

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American Bookmen

WASHINGTON IRVING

A BRITISH matron and her daughter are said to have been seen sixty or seventy years ago in an Italian gallery standing before a bust of Washington. "Mother, who was Washington?" asked the girl. "Why, my dear, don't you know?" answered the horrified parent; "he wrote the *Sketch-Book*." Whatever confusion was in her mind, it is true that just as clearly as the General was the Father of his Country in affairs of State, his biographer held this place in our republic of letters. Before him no American, with the exception of the forgotten novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, had made literature a profession. Writers there had been by the score, and good writers, as names like those of Franklin and Hamilton cry out; but they were writers after they were something else. It remained for Washington Irving to become the first American man of letters known as such the world over.

A house in William Street, New York, was the place of Irving's birth, on April 3, 1783. The British were soon to evacuate the city, and Washington was to take possession of it. Mrs. Irving, a warm-hearted woman of English birth, and an ardent patriot of the new land, said, "Washington's work is ended, and the child shall be named after him." The child was still in the care of a Scotch nurse when one day she saw the President, as Washington then was, enter a shop. "Please your Honour," said she, following him in, "here's a bairn was named after you." The President laid his hand on the boy's head, and gave him a blessing, which he never forgot.

The family into which Irving was born would be called large to-day, since he was an eighth son, and the youngest of eleven children, all but three of whom grew up. The father was Scotch, of excellent descent, and a Presbyterian of the sterner type. It did not take Irving long to unlearn the lesson of his youth, that everything pleasant was wicked; yet he never replaced it with the converse belief. "O Washington, if you were only good!" his mother exclaimed to him one day. Lacking sympathy with his father's religious views, he yet had goodness enough to betake himself independently to Trinity Church, and to be confirmed in the faith of his mother's earlier days. He possessed, too, enough of another spirit, to slip away, whenever he

could afford it, to the forbidden play-house, returning home at nine for family prayers, after which he would go promptly to his room, not to sleep, but to climb out of a window and be back at the theatre in time for the after-piece.

The person who objected to the sight of brethren dwelling together in unity, because it was much less entertaining than that of brothers who quarrel, would have been disappointed in the Irving family. As Washington Irving approached manhood, after a desultory schooling which ended when he was sixteen, his share in literary undertakings with his older brothers was an early evidence of the devoted fraternal intimacy which only death could end. One of these older brothers, Peter, a graduate of Columbia College — as Irving would probably have been if he had given promise of any fondness for methodical study — established a newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, and to this the author contributed his first literary productions, a series of letters signed "Jonathan Oldstyle." They were sprightly and clever enough — mainly in their criticism of plays and players — to set people talking, and to win for the boy of nineteen a small fame even outside his native city.

How came he by the power to make himself felt at so early a day? Surely not through his masters at school so much as by his own way of cultivating a strong native gift. When he was placed in a

lawyer's office at sixteen, his reading was far more than in letters — for he drank deep of the English classics, even in "office hours" — and Irving was more for the expression of himself than for experiment in the profession he never left. There were in this period, moreover, ramblings into the Sleepy Hollow region, and farther into the Hudson, and nearer home. The quick and the ready mind got their full share of training these many days *sine libro*.

It may have been his delicate health that kept him but an indifferent student. It was certainly this and to his brothers' generous care of him that he owed his first trip to Europe, in 1804, as captain of the ship sailing for Bordeaux or thereabouts, as Irving stepped over the rail, "a chap who will go overboard before we get to sea." On the contrary, he came back vastly stronger in 1806, and with an horizon widened by the opportunities of which he had availed himself of seeing stimulating persons and things.

The New York to which Irving returned was a gamesome city of the "Manhattoes," as he called it, had grown from the Dutch town of inhabitants, in which he was born, to a city of 80,000 souls. The region between Broadway Street and the Battery was still the fashionable life of town, and into the life of this lively and clever and handsome youth entered

Of law, again, he read enough to be admitted to the bar, but society for a time was the most engrossing interest of his life. One has but to look at Vanderlyn's sketch of him as he appeared in 1805 to understand why a young man who added wit, good feeling, and gallantry to the charm of such a person found all the doors that he had time to enter open to him, not only in New York, but at Ballston Spa, the summer resort of fashion early in the century, and in Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore. One is not sorry to find a trace of the dandy in young Irving, or to read in a letter to his brother Peter in England, before this period was passed, "Send me out a handsome coat, but not with a waist as long as a turnspit's." Then besides he would have "a waistcoat or two of fashionable kind, and anything that your fancy may suggest." There are ample reasons for believing that the young women of his day believed him quite as fascinating a blade as he would have had himself appear.

With the gayer young men of the town, too, he played a spirited part. "The Nine Worthies" and "The Lads of Kilkenny" were the names under which a group of them met and dined and frolicked. Most of these Worthies attained distinction of one sort and another in their later years, and the conscience of the day suffered no great shock from their convivial doings. A story is gaily told of one of them returning alone from a dinner, and

falling through a grating in the sidewalk. He could not get out, and feared an ill night of it; but one by one the rest of the party which he had left fell into the same pit, and there they spent the remainder of the night happily together. On another occasion a policeman thought he had identified one of the



Launcelot Langstaff, esq.

Frontispiece to the first number of
"Salmagundi."

Worthies by the hat he wore, and taking him to his lodgings was persuaded with difficulty that the body was that of another member of the company. Their gaiety was not confined to the town, but at a country-place on the Passaic, which figures in *Salmagundi* as Cockloft Hall, they spent many merry days and

nights. It would be utterly unfair to leave the impression that Irving and his fellows were a bad lot. They were nothing of the sort; in an age when pleasures of a certain kind were followed more frankly than in our generation, they were merely like other high-spirited young fellows of their world.

It was characteristic of nearly all the work of Irving's pen that it reflected truthfully some phase of his life ; and it is worth remarking that his first work which is still sometimes read, could never have been but for the somewhat butterfly existence of these early days. In January, 1807, appeared the initial number of *Salmagundi*, a periodical conducted by Irving, his older brother William, and James Kirke Paulding, who, besides attaining honour as a writer as time went on, became Secretary of the Navy, and now is awarded the credit of having provided the world with the rhyme of " Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." These three young editors began their career with the announcement : " Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age ; this is an arduous task, and therefore we undertake it with confidence." Their small sheet, with yellow covers, was issued by an eccentric publisher, Longworth, the front of whose house was almost entirely hidden by a huge painting of the crowning of Shakespeare. The paper appeared every fortnight, maintaining to the end a humorous disregard of profit and the public, and with perfect unconcern ceased to be after twenty numbers had securely established its success. In later years Irving put a slight value upon his contributions to *Salmagundi*, but in them, as in the work of the other editors, it is impossible to ignore a sprightly clever-

SALMAGUNDI;
OR, THE
WHIM-WHAMS AND OPINIONS
OF
LAUNCELOT LANGSTAFF, ESQ.
AND OTHERS.

In hoc est hosh, cum quiz et joketez,
Et smokem, toastem, roastem folkretz.
Yee, faw, fum. *Palmanator.*
With baked, and broil'd, and steew'd, and toasted,
And fried, and boil'd, and smok'd, and roasted,
We treat the town.

NO. VIII.] *Saturday, April 18, 1807.*

BY ANTHONY EVERGREEN, GENT.

“In all thy humors, whether grave or mellow,
Thou’rt such a touchy, testy, pleasant fellow;
Hast so much wit, and mirth, and spleen about thee,
There is no living with thee—nor without thee.”

“NEVER, in the memory of the oldest inhabitant has there been known a more backward spring.” This is the universal remark among the almanac quidnuncs, and weather wiseacres of the day; and I have heard it at least fifty-five times from old Mrs. Cockloft, who, poor woman, is one of those walking almanacs that foretel every snow, rain, or frost by the shooting of corns, a pain in the bones, or an “ugly stitch in the side.” I do not recollect, in the whole course of my life, to have seen the month of March indulge in such untoward capers, caprices and coquetries as it has done this year: I might have forgiven these vagaries, had they not completely knocked up my friend Langstaff.

FAC-SIMILE PAGE OF “SALMAGUNDI” AS IT ORIGINALLY
APPEARED.

ness and a reproduction of the colour and foibles of society, so convincingly faithful as to have a positive historic value. It was eminently a New York publication, even to the indulgence of the now time-honoured flings at Philadelphia and its people. The chief interest in Irving's work for it, which is easily picked out, lies in the detection of the first notes in the many keys to which his more practised voice was to be set.

Directly due to his surroundings, also, was Irving's next piece of work, *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809). He began it with his brother Peter as a satire on a serious history of the town, which had just been published; and when Peter was called abroad Irving had his own will in making it just what it is — a masterpiece in the humour of the day which begot it. There is no need of dwelling upon its qualities, but when we call our own day the day of clever advertising, it is well to remember the heralding of the Knickerbocker History. The grave communications to the *Evening Post*, beginning six weeks before the book appeared, about an old Diedrich Knickerbocker who had strayed from New York without paying for his lodgings, about his having been seen on the way to Albany, and the landlord's final decision to print a manuscript which the old man left behind, and to apply the proceeds to the unpaid bill — all these would be worth transcribing in full were they not included in the later editions

of the book. Besides almost leading a city official to offer a reward for the missing Diedrich, they served an excellent purpose in stirring up curiosity, which the book appeased to the satisfaction of all but the representatives of the families which ever since have gone by the name of Knickerbocker. One can see readily now why their ancestral pride must have been touched at first. They could not possibly have foreseen that banks, clubs, buildings, manufactories, and enterprises of every sort would be named one day for their forefathers because of this very book, and that the young author who had hurt their feelings was the creator of the whole Knickerbocker background before which modern New York is very glad to stand.

While he was at work upon the last part of the Knickerbocker History, the great sorrow of Irving's life befell him. Miss Matilda Hoffman, to whom he was engaged to be married, died after a brief illness. George William Curtis once described Irving's life as "a life without events, or only the events of all our lives, except that it lacks the great event of marriage." The death which caused this lack, though it did not rob him of the courage to finish his humourous production, drove him for a time from all society, and made an impression upon his spirit which his whole subsequent life of activity never quite removed. It is by no means certain that as the years went by he never thought again of

marriage for himself. Indeed, one is inclined to believe that at Dresden, in 1823, if all the circumstances had been propitious, he would have married an English girl with whom and whose family he had formed a tender intimacy. But when he died an old man, a lock to which he himself had always kept the key was found to guard a braid of hair and a beautiful miniature, with a slip of paper marked in his own handwriting, "Matilda Hoffman." No less faithfully had he kept her Bible and Prayer-Book throughout his life. Of the miniature his publisher, George P. Putnam, told the story of having once had it retouched and remounted for its possessor, forty years after Miss Hoffman's death. "When I returned it to him in a suitable velvet case," said Mr. Putnam, "he took it to a quiet corner and looked intently on the face for some minutes, apparently unobserved, his tears falling freely on the glass as he gazed." Who shall say that the cherishing of such a memory as this did not find its direct expression in the gentle chivalry with which he bore himself, as a writer and as a man, towards all women?

Even before Miss Hoffman's death Irving had been in doubt about the career best suited to his talents; and the dejection into which he fell at once did not help his decision. The law held his interest but slightly. The editing of a magazine, which he undertook in Philadelphia, was distasteful to him, both because of his tender heart in criticism and



IRVING AT 25.

From an original sketch by Jarvis.

because of the necessity for systematic work. "Ah," he said once, in later life, "don't talk to me of system; I never had any. . . . I have, it is true, my little budgets of notes—some tied one way, some another—and which when I need, I think I come upon in my pigeon-holes by a sort of instinct. That is all there is of it." But though the magazine did not please him, and he dropped it at the beginning of 1815, it kept his restless feet somewhat in the path of letters.

The War of 1812 had stirred Irving's patriotism, and was responsible for his bearing for a time the title of colonel, as an aide to Governor Tompkins of New York. After peace was declared Irving, always ready for an expedition, was on the very point of sailing with Decatur to the Algerian coast; but changing his plan almost at the last moment, yet unwilling to give up the journey abroad, he sailed instead for Liverpool to join his brother Peter in the conduct of the English branch of the commercial house on which their fortunes depended. It was seventeen years later, in 1832, that he set foot again on American soil.

One of the stock objections to Irving, urged even by English critics, is that his books are more English than American. As early as in the days of *Salmagundi* he had shown, as he was always to show, how much his habit of mind and expression owed to Addison, Steele, and other models of our com-

mon tongue. At heart, moreover, Irving was a Tory, a Conservative. His very nature felt a kinship with whatever was long established and mellowed by centuries of tradition. The facts that he spent much time in the family of a married sister in England, and through his talents and graces soon found himself welcomed to the inner life of many other English houses, must have contributed much to his sympathy with the scenes of "our old home." But there is no need of framing a defence for such an attitude. "What, pray, if the hero of Bracebridge Hall be own cousin to Sir Roger de Coverley?" Ik Marvel once asked. "Is that a relationship to be discarded?" Surely not, and no less surely did our country and England, in a time when the press of both lands kept the mutual feeling of animosity at a high tension, owe to Irving a better knowledge of each other and a truer recognition of the good to be found on both sides of the water. It was Thackeray who called him "the first ambassador whom the New World of Letters sent to the Old." Irving's own explanation of the English interest in him was merely this: "I was looked upon as something new and strange in literature; a kind of demi-savage, with a feather in his hand instead of on his head; and there was curiosity to hear what such a being had to say about civilised society."

This curiosity did not exist at once. When he

came to England he was comparatively unknown. Scott, to be sure, had read what he called "the most excellently jocose history of New York," and had thoroughly enjoyed it. But Irving had no general fame, and for several years had no opportunity of creating it. The uncongenial business which had brought him to Liverpool took most of his time, and to no avail, for in 1818 the enterprise proved itself a failure. It was this event which made it a necessity for Irving to look upon literature as a means of support more than of recreation. He ceased to be merely the ornamental member of his family, and as time went on took upon himself the care of those who had cared for him. A more winning picture of brotherly sympathy and a generosity in which largeness and delicacy were combined could hardly be found than that which the correspondence between Irving and his brother Peter, never strong after the Liverpool failure, revealed. Be it said that the success which Irving was not slow in reaching when once he set about to attain it rendered him abundantly able to do for others besides himself.

It was the *Sketch-Book*, of which the first parts appeared in America in 1819, when Irving was thirty-six, that told all English-speaking readers of a new writer who must be recognised. The book was vastly successful at home, and when Irving found its portions copied in English prints, he saw

the necessity of publishing it in England. Murray, "the prince of publishers," declined at first to take it, employing a formula of considerate rejection which the modern publisher has not learned to improve upon — "only because I do not see that scope in the nature of it which would enable me to make those satisfactory accounts between us, without which I really feel no satisfaction in engaging." Accordingly Irving decided to print the book at his own risk in England; but the printer failed soon after the book appeared, whereupon Murray was only too glad to take the *Sketch-Book* into his own hands. From this time on he was Irving's English publisher, and so liberal were his dealings throughout their intercourse, that one may well believe with Murray's biographer, that the writer had far more profit from his books than the publisher — no common circumstance in those or later days.

It would be tedious to chronicle with precision the completion from time to time of Irving's other books. When the sun has risen above the early morning sky we are content to let it shine on without our close scrutiny. One could not follow Irving's work, however, without noticing how one phase of its early character is continued, how it constantly reflects the circumstances of his life. As a wanderer about England and the Continent, he turns a quick eye upon social life, marks the pathetic and humourous scenes about him, and tells

It is always had an opinion that
some good might be done by keeping
machines in good humour with one another.

I may be wrong in my philosophy,
but I shall continue to practice it
until convinced of its fallacy. When
I discover the world to be all that it
has been represented by sneering cynics
and whining poets, I will turn to
and chuck it all; in the mean while,
sensible reader, I hope you will not
think lightly of me, because I
cannot believe this to be so very
bad a world as it is represented.

thine truly

Jeffrey Crayon.

us all he sees in books like *Bracebridge Hall* and *Tales of a Traveller*. He goes to Spain to investigate some special documents concerning Columbus, and the result is not only a body of historical work beyond his own expectations, but the drawing of many small pictures, distinctively Geoffrey Crayon's, like those which figure in *The Alhambra*. So clearly do the writings express the man that one reads his *Life and Letters* only to become better acquainted with the genial, sympathetic, good friend one has come to know in his works. Indeed, he might have been writing truthfully of himself when he wrote of Goldsmith: "Few have so eminently possessed the magic gift of identifying themselves with their writings."

It is in the record of his friendships abroad and at home that one comes, perhaps, most nearly to the man himself. He looked upon the world and people with a smiling front, and so, for the most part, they looked back at him. "Ah, God bless your merry face!" said an Irish beggarwoman to him one day, as he walked along the street enjoying the memory of one of his own jokes, "surely you're not the man will refuse a poor woman a *sixpence*?" A guinea was the smallest coin he had in his pocket, and he gave it to her. Much of his philosophy of life is contained in the passage in Irving's handwriting, which the reader can easily make out here for himself. Early in his English life he meets with

Scott, who promptly thanks "Tom" Campbell "for making me known to Mr. Washington Irving, who is one of the best and pleasantest acquaintances I have made this many a day." Of Scott in return Irving says: "He is a man that, if you knew, you would love; a right honest-hearted, generous-spirited being." Again he calls him "a sterling golden-hearted old worthy, full of the joyousness of youth." He meets with Moore, and cares so greatly for him as even to admire poetry which he had previously condemned — not an unprecedented change, be it said, when friendship and criticism become intermingled. Yet he was not quite blind to the weaknesses of his friends. Holding the highest regard for the aged Samuel Rogers, he could make the shrewd observation in a letter: "I dined *tête-à-tête* with him some time since, and he served up his friends as he served up his fish, with a squeeze of lemon over each. It was very piquant, but it rather set my teeth on edge." With the painters Leslie and Gilbert Stuart Newton it was inevitable that Geoffrey Crayon should have felt a close kinship. On the basis of his intimacy with each, and of the sort of figure painting which occupied all three, it were no unworthy task for the proper person to tell us something of the art which appealed most strongly to the taste of the twenties and thirties, and to speculate on the different employment which the brushes and the pen of three such friends would find for themselves at this our end of the century.

One should not bring Irving back from his English friendships without repeating the classic story of the origin of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*. If report be true, it was to Irving that Scott owed his idea of this character. Miss Rebecca Gratz, of Philadelphia, had been one of Miss Hoffman's dearest friends, and was with her to the end of her fatal illness. Irving's account of the beautiful American Jewess, full of devotion to the faith of her fathers, is said to have given Scott the original of the very person that was needed in his tale.

We cannot follow Irving through his busy sojourn in Spain (where the travelling student Longfellow reported him at work every morning at six o'clock), through his service as Secretary of the American Legation in London, his receiving of an honorary degree at Oxford, where the undergraduates, hailing him as Diedrich Knickerbocker and Rip Van Winkle, gave him a reception very like that which Dr. Holmes, amid inquiries about the One Hoss Shay, and the singing of "Holmes, sweet Holmes," received more than half a century later. It was after all these experiences that he returned, in 1832, to New York, having meanwhile declined official posts at home because of his certainty that the life in Europe would be the best he could live for the exercise and development of his own gifts. Home-sick he had often been, and always unfalteringly an American at heart. The town he had left had grown

in seventeen years almost beyond recognition. His countrymen's appreciation of him had grown in equal measure. A great banquet of welcome celebrated his return. "I am asked how long I mean to remain here," he said at the end of his speech at the dinner. "They know but little of my heart or my feelings who can ask me this question. I answer, As long as I live."

Except for his return to Spain as American Minister, from 1842 to 1846, this is what he did, and it appears that he would not have left his home then but for an impelling sense of duty and the hope for leisure at Madrid to work upon his *Life of Washington*. He had established himself, in 1835, at Wolfert's Roost, an old Dutch house on the Hudson, in the place now known as Irvington, and here, until the end of his life, his affections were centred. An architect extended the cottage, till under its name of "Sunnyside" it bore the look of an English country-house. Ivy from Melrose Abbey soon covered its walls, and old Dutch weather-cocks, one from the Stadt-house of New Amsterdam, surmounted its roofs. When Philip Hone first saw the house it was a modest affair in comparison with other country-places near it; "only one story high," his Diary tells us; "but the admirers of the gentle Geoffrey think, no doubt, that one *story* of his is worth more than half a dozen of other people's." Like Scott, Irving took the greatest pleasure in

beautifying and enlarging his establishment, though, unlike the master of Abbotsford, he had the wisdom not to spend vast sums in such enterprises before they were earned. Within, the house was brightened by the constant presence of his nieces and his brother Ebenezer, and their loving service each for all.

The Western travels, of which *A Tour on the Prairies* preserves the record, took place before the settlement at Sunnyside, but it was not in nature for one who had led Irving's life to retire wholly into rusticity. We find him making frequent visits to New York, for the play, for music, of both of which he was heartily fond. Public appearances he shunned, yet when Dickens came to New York in 1842 Irving could not escape presiding at the great dinner in his honour. They had already become friends through correspondence, for Irving's delight in *Little Nell* had to be expressed in a letter to the author, and Dickens in his enthusiastic response had said: "*Diedrich Knickerbocker* I have worn to death in my pocket, and yet I should show you his mutilated carcass with a joy past all expression." The night of the public dinner came, and Irving's dread of the introductory speech kept him murmuring throughout the repast, "I shall certainly break down." At the proper time he rose to his feet, began bravely, but could utter only a few sentences, and ended by taking refuge in the announcement

of the toast, "Charles Dickens, the guest of the nation." The applause was generous, and as Irving took his seat, "There," he said, "I told you I should break down, and I have done it." Later in 1842, while on his way to Madrid, he found himself called upon at the dinner of the Literary Fund in London to respond to the toast "Washington Irving and American Literature." All he could bring himself to say, in acknowledgment of his enthusiastic reception, was, "I beg to return you my very sincere thanks." One Englishman at the table was heard to make the laconic comment, "Brief?" "Yes," said another beside him, "but you can tell the gentleman in the very tone of his voice."

Going beyond New York in his own country he was sometimes to be found in Baltimore, Washington, and other places. Another fragment of Philip Hone's Diary, after he had seen Irving at a levee of President Tyler's, where Dickens was also present, shows clearly enough in what esteem his countrymen held him: "As far as I could judge, Irving outbozzed Boz. He collected a crowd around him; the men pressed on to shake his hand, and the women to touch the hem of his garment. Somebody told me that they saw a woman put on his hat, in order, as she told her companion, to say that she had worn Washington Irving's hat. All this was 'fun to them,' but death to poor Irving, who has no relish for this sort of glorification, and

has less tact than any man living to get along with it decently."

It is not the Irving of Washington and Madrid that one likes best to look back upon through his declining years, but the Irving of Sunnyside. Here he was at his best, declaring that no period of his life had been so full of satisfaction to him, working through the mornings, and when his work was done entering with zest into the pleasures of his family and their neighbours. It seems that he was accessible even to bores, and during his last illness, a few months before its end, could not refuse the importunity of an autograph hunter. He did not feel at the time like writing his name, but promised to forward it by mail. The stranger then inquired what the charge would be, saying, "It is a principle with me always to pay for such things." "It is a principle with me," replied Irving, with a sharpness of which we are glad for once to read, "never to take pay!"

The work of his last years, the *Life of Washington*, of which he was unable to correct the final pages of proof, had been suggested to him as early as 1825 by the publisher Constable. From time to time he had had to postpone his work upon it, and the opportunity might never have come if he had carried out a purpose, long cherished, to tell the story of the "Conquest of Mexico." But in 1838 he found that Prescott was at work upon the same

theme, and at no little sacrifice of desire and accomplished work turned the whole subject over to the younger writer.

It was on November 28, 1859, when Irving was seventy-six years old, that his death came. He had been in poor health for some months, suffering much from sleeplessness and a shortness of breath, but at the last a weakness of the heart brought the sudden end. Lacking to-day a man of letters who holds such a place in the affections of his countrymen as Irving held, it is difficult for us to realise the impression made by his death. It was as if a President or a great soldier had died in these later years. Flags on shipping and buildings in New York flew at half-mast, and the Mayor and Council recognised the event as a public grief. A multitude of people bore witness to their own sense of loss at the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. The day of the funeral, December 1, had the fullest beauty and suggestion of Indian summer—"one of his own days," the people said. It is to Longfellow,

"No singer vast of voice ; yet one who leaves
His native air the sweeter for his song,"

that we instinctively turn for the words :

IN THE CHURCHYARD AT TARRYTOWN

Here lies the gentle humourist, who died
In the bright Indian Summer of his fame !
A simple stone, with but a date and name,
Marks his secluded resting-place beside

The river that he loved and glorified.
Here in the autumn of his days he came,
But the dry leaves of life were all aflame
With tints that brightened and were multiplied.
How sweet a life was his ; how sweet a death !
Living, to wing with mirth the weary hours,
Or with romantic tales the heart to cheer ;
Dying, to leave a memory like the breath
Of summers full of sunshine and of showers,
A grief and gladness in the atmosphere.

Since his death there has been time to see Washington Irving and the heritage he left our letters in the perspective of distance. Of the tangible debts we owe him, the "Knickerbocker idea" has been mentioned in its place. Shall we not also render him thanks, with Joseph Jefferson as a fellow-interpreter, for our national possession of Rip Van Winkle? Mr. Jefferson in his charming autobiography tells us how the play, as we now have it, came into being; and of course Irving, in his narrative, stands behind it all. How real a creature Rip has become appears in Jefferson's story of the negro waiter at the Catskill Hotel, who, exclaiming, "Dat's de man," pointed him out to an incredulous visitor as the very person who had slept twenty years. How the author and the actor are mingled in the popular imagination we see in the anecdote of Jefferson's introduction to the Rip Van Winkle Club, of Catskill, by its agitated president as "Mr. Washington Irving." To have given us both the

Knickerbockers and Rip Van Winkle constitutes an achievement in American letters which it would be hard to parallel.

Whether a large quantity of his work will go down to later posterity in any living sense, the critic of to-day would assert with less confidence than Irving's contemporaries were wont to feel. The fashions in sentiment, humour, and the narration of fact and fiction change, like clothes, with the years. The works of the pen possessing that broad quality which is above fashions are but few; and even under the great names in letters rigorous selection from a thousand pages sometimes leaves but a score that really live. The critic who would deny that these few pages are not to be found in Irving would himself be hard to find. Exactly which are these pages? Ah, the days of the prophets are past!

But though fashions change in books, in men they are invariable. Whether such an one as Irving had lived before we had a country, or should present himself to a generation yet unborn, he would still be one of those whom the world must love. He was beyond all things else a gentleman, with the best qualities of that undying race. If it is necessary to enumerate and explain them now, this writing will have been in vain. The poets, after all, are the men who come nearest to the truth, and these lines from the *Fable for Critics* certainly tell much of it:

“ To a true poet-heart add the fun of Dick Steele,
Throw in *all* of Addison, *minus* the chill,
With the whole of that partnership's stock and good will,
Mix well, and while stirring, hum o'er, as a spell,
The fine *old* English Gentleman, simmer it well,
Sweeten just to your own private liking, then strain,
That only the finest and clearest remain,
Let it stand out of doors till a soul it receives
From the warm, lazy sun loitering down through green leaves,
And you 'll find a choice nature, not wholly deserving
A name either English or Yankee — just Irving.”

We did not select the Father of our Country,
but Washington has pleased us well; neither did
we choose our first American man of letters, but
had this opportunity been granted, we could hardly
have done better than to select — “just Irving.”

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

THERE is no lack of testimony to show that the men of Cooper's own day were his enthusiastic readers. The men of our time have read him, for the greater part, as boys ; and the men of the decades immediately to come — that is, the boys of our own households — are principally his readers to-day. Is not this merely another way of saying that the writer who shared with Irving the earliest honours of American literature, in the boyhood of its history, has taken his more permanent place as the favourite of boyhood through the generations that follow him ?

Irving late in life is reported to have said of a literary comrade : " He and I were very fortunate in being born so early. We should have no chance now against the battalions of better writers." It is, indeed, hard for us to realise in the present " clash of magazines " and new books how meagre in quantity and quality was the production of American writers before Cooper attained his first successes. Except for Irving and Bryant, who read his poem, " The Ages," at Cambridge in the year of the ap-

pearance of *The Spy*, a list of the writers of that time would be a catalogue of half and quite forgotten names. But it concerns us less to inquire into the precise state of American literature as Cooper found it — a suggestion is enough — than to see what he brought into it.

At the very beginning it may be said that no man ever brought more of himself into what he wrote than Cooper. His early training, his later circumstances, his personal weaknesses and strengths all left indelible marks upon the pages of his books. Consequently there is no writer whose life is better worth studying for the light it throws directly upon the productions of his pen.

It was at Burlington, New Jersey, on September 15, 1789, that Cooper was born. His father, William Cooper, was of Quaker, English descent; his mother, Elizabeth Fenimore, of Swedish blood. The Coopers had come from Shakespeare's birthplace in Warwickshire to New Jersey more than a hundred years before the novelist's birth, and, holding broad tracts of land in the new country, had provided their best-known descendant with a well-inherited national feeling. James Cooper, as he was called till the New York Legislature in 1826 made the family name Fenimore-Cooper, in which the hyphen was not long retained, was the eleventh of twelve children. A household in those days was no scanty affair, and when William Cooper, in 1790,

transported his establishment from Burlington to the place that was to bear the name of Cooperstown, the cavalcade numbered fifteen persons. Round and about the head-waters of the Susquehanna, the father of the novelist had recently become possessed of thousands of acres of land, and here, in 1799, he finished the building of his manor-house, Otsego Hall, for a long time the most distinguished private dwelling in or near the Otsego region of New York.

What is now a prosperous farming district was then a wilderness, at least on one side; for Cooperstown was a veritable frontier settlement. The young Cooper would have been a strangely different person from the hosts of boys whose delight he has been, if the lake and the woods at his very doors had not called him irresistibly to learn all that they had to teach him, and it is easy to believe that his response to the call was eager. His books themselves bear evidence enough that his knowledge and love of the woods came to him at the time when the mind receives its enduring impressions. The life at his father's house through these early years was also full of expanding influences. The conquest of the wilderness and the furtherance of large-minded plans for the future of a new community are not always joined, as they were in the Cooper family, with a domestic life of grace and refinement. The growing town of Judge William

For all his churchmanship he did not present himself for confirmation like Irving, as a boy, but waited until the very year of his death; both of them, however, were for a time delegates to the diocesan convention of New York. What Cooper took with him to college was merely a boy's feeling on all subjects, for he was only thirteen when he entered the Class of 1806 in the second term of its Freshman year, with but one classmate younger than himself. A disposition to see more of the country and waters about New Haven than of his books, and the participation in his Junior year in a frolic which the Faculty considered a weightier offence than his father would have had them think it, put an end to his collegiate life. Judge Cooper, a prominent Federalist and several times a member of Congress, had no difficulty in securing his son's appointment as a midshipman in the navy, and the boy for nearly a year had the preliminary training of many of our naval officers while yet there was no Annapolis Academy — before the mast on a merchantman. On the ship *Sterling* he sailed to London and Gibraltar, and as a quick-minded, active youth won from the sea a species of teaching which served his later purposes as well as his early knowledge of the woods. When his commission, dated January 1, 1808, made a full-fledged midshipman of him, he saw a few years of service on Lake Ontario and Lake Champlain; but his marriage, in 1811, to

Miss De Lancey, a sister of the Bishop of Western New York, divorced him from the sea. In the waters about Hell Gate and Shelter Island, well known to modern yachtsmen, one finds that he sailed enthusiastically for pleasure, as, indeed, throughout his life he betook himself to boats and the woods whenever it was possible.

The seeker for *personalia* touching Cooper's early days must often have thought it the pity of pities that on his death-bed he expressed to his family a wish, naturally regarded as a command, that no biography of him should come from them. Family papers, therefore, have had no such publicity as in many another instance. It was in his family life that the best side of Cooper's nature, as time developed it, was shown, yet the lips of those who only could reveal his gentler characteristics, and give the world a fair acquaintance with the whole man, have been for the most part sealed. His daughter, Susan Fenimore Cooper, in the introductions written for his novels since his death, gives many random glimpses of the loveable qualities of her father; but no complete picture, painted with all the colours that might have entered into it, has ever been drawn. Until Professor Lounsbury's excellent life of Cooper appeared in 1882, there was no more adequate account of his career than that contained in Bryant's memorial oration delivered five months after his death.

One must be content, therefore, with a slender knowledge of Cooper's earlier years. Bits of suggestion show his young manhood to have been vigorous and spirited in body and mind. One anecdote, preserved in the annals of Cooperstown, may not be too trivial to repeat. It is probably of the time while Cooper was a midshipman, and at home on a furlough. A foot-race was to be run through certain streets of the village, for the prize of a basket of fruit. While Cooper and his competitor were preparing to start, a little girl stood by, full of eagerness for the exciting event. Cooper quickly turned and picked her up in his arms. "I'll carry her with me, and beat you!" he exclaimed, and away they went, Cooper with his laughing burden, the other runner untrammelled. It is almost needless to add that Cooper won the race, else why should the story have been preserved?

Nearly ten years passed between Cooper's marriage and the appearance of his first book. In this time the last thing he could have called himself was a "bookman." He was merely a country gentleman, happily married, of domestic tastes, and interested in improving the several places in which successively he lived, in Cooperstown and Westchester County. The inevitable anecdote of the beginning of his literary career is that one day, on finishing an English novel, he put the book down

impatiently and told his wife he could write a better story himself. She challenged him to do it, and his first novel, *Precaution*, was the result. Apparently its highest claim to consideration by American readers at the time was that in England it was thought to be the work of an Englishman. The American prophet could hope for little honour at home unless the mother country first accorded it to him.

“ God forbid thou shouldst get in the clutches of Blackwood,
O Lord ! how the wits of Old England would grin ! ”

are two lines from some verses addressed by one American writer of Cooper's early day to another, and they indicate fairly a deprecatory attitude that was commonly taken.

But it was not for a man of Cooper's individuality to walk long in paths that could be mistaken for any but his own. Such success as *Precaution* attained was sufficient to make his friends spur him on to further exertion, and *The Spy*, published in the next year, 1821, was a definite announcement both to English and American readers, who only a year before had seen the completion of Irving's *Sketch Book*, that still another vital figure had appeared in literature. Of the impression the book created at home and abroad, the attempts to identify Harvey Birch with various real persons, the translation of the story into many languages, and the adoption of the principal character by at least one

individual, a French spy, as a model for his own actions, — of these things, and much besides, many pages might be written if this were the place to tell the whole history of *The Spy*.

No time was lost in following up this eminent success. By 1826, Cooper's popular fame was securely established by *The Pioneers*, *The Pilot* (written to show that a truer picture of sea-life than Scott's *Pirate* could be drawn), and *The Last of the Mohicans*. In each of these, as in everything else that he did best, he wrote of the scenes he knew and loved. In his failures, the works in which he was obviously out of his element, he has been well likened by his biographer to a backwoods landlord of whom Cooper himself told the story. A party of gentlemen, Cooper being one of them, stopped at his inn one night and asked for entertainment. The landlord, dismayed, said he had nothing in his house fit for them to eat. "What have you?" they inquired. "Only venison, pheasant, wild duck, and some fresh fish," he replied. What more could be wished, they asked him; and his answer was that he thought they might want some salt pork. Cooper, as time went on, too often withheld the venison and wild duck which he had already shown himself capable of furnishing.

But the "salt pork" period of his production did not come for several years more. His popularity was at a high point when, having made literature defi-

nately his employment, he moved with his increasing family to New York City, and entered conspicuously into its best social and intellectual affairs. He was the founder and the life of the Bread and Cheese Club, which brought together every week the cleverest men in the town, and before he sailed for Europe, in 1826, a great dinner in his honour gave memorable evidence of the esteem in which his countrymen held him. Chancellor Kent presided; General Scott, Governor DeWitt Clinton, Charles King, afterwards President of Columbia College, and many others of almost equal note were of the company.

With a family of ten persons, including servants, Cooper moved about Europe for more than seven years, always avoiding hotels and establishing himself in rooms, which were made to seem as much like home as possible. Italy was the country which most won his affections, but France, Germany, Switzerland, and England were all seen with an intimacy which gave him some real knowledge of their life. It was during this stay abroad that the habit of drawing comparisons of national traits fixed itself upon him. The truth, as he conceived it, was always of the first importance to him, and in his telling of it, in story, exhortation, and controversial writing, sometimes blended into one, he managed by degrees to step on nearly all the toes that came within his reach. With a wider knowledge of the world

than most of his countrymen, he naturally became
 unconscious of American shortcomings, and they irri-
 ted him. He was no less provoked by the dense
 European ignorance of American life. It did not
 assure him to find a school-teacher in Dresden
 unruinely surprised at the discovery that the Cooper
 children were not blacks. In England he was
 unable to persuade an elderly scholar of his acquaint-
 ance that there was no truth in a certain diction-
 ary definition of the verb *to gouge*, "to squeeze
 out a man's eye with the thumb; a cruel practice
 used by the Bostonians in America." In France a
 more serious matter was the part he took in a contro-
 versy about the relative expenses of a republic and
 monarchy as forms of government. His position
 appears to have been patriotic and just, but for some
 reason it was misunderstood at home, and materially
 affected his popularity. If Jingoism rears its head
 on this day, it was rampant in that, and one who
 cared at all for the esteem of fellow-Americans had
 to be scrupulous indeed in venturing remarks that
 could be construed into aspersions, however remote,
 upon the American eagle. Cooper did not care,
 and consequently estranged many of his country-
 men; and readers abroad, finding as many flings at
 themselves as at Americans, could not regard him
 with any kinder feeling.

Yet it would be unfair to leave the impression
 that Cooper's European days were given over to

conflict. There is constantly the fair background of his family life, the sharing of all his pleasures with those he loved, the putting aside of his work, even an unfinished page, to join in a game of backgammon or chess or to play with his children. There are glimpses of high friendships, such as that with Lafayette. There is the meeting in Paris with Sir Walter Scott.

“Est-ce Monsieur Cooper que j’ai l’honneur de voir?”

“Monsieur, je m’appelle Cooper.”

“Eh bien, donc, je suis Walter Scott.” A hearty greeting, each to each, ended with Sir Walter’s suddenly recollecting himself, and saying, “Well, here have I been *parley vooing* to you in a way to surprise you, no doubt, but these Frenchmen have got my tongue so set to their lingo that I have half forgotten my own language.” It is a delight to read of the talk that followed, and worthy of remembrance to find “the American Scott” in these days calling himself a chip from the block of the great romancer, and speaking of Sir Walter as “my sovereign.” Nor should it be forgotten that Cooper’s years in Europe were full of literary achievement. *The Prairie*, *The Red Rover*, and *The Water Witch* were all written during his absence from America, besides four other tales of varying merit and several productions outside the field of fiction. For future use, moreover, Cooper gathered

the material for ten volumes of travel published after his return.

It was in 1833 that he set foot again on his native soil, never to leave it. All the growth of New York and much of the development of the country appeared to him a movement in the wrong direction,—away from distinction and toward commonplace. A dinner, like the one which marked his departure, was suggested on his return, but feeling or imagining that his countrymen were in no real sympathy with him, he declined the honour. He took up his abode in Cooperstown, renovated Otsego Hall (where before his death seventeen new works of fiction were written), and had the misfortune to enter at once into a controversy with his fellow-townsmen.

Cooper was in the right, and the Cooperstown folk were wrong. They were not the owners, as they thought they were, of Three-Mile Point, a portion of the Cooper property, which they had long used as a pleasure ground. He warned them against trespassing, and they passed resolutions, full of scorn for “one J. Fenimore Cooper,” and denouncing “any man as sycophant who has, or shall, ask permission of James F. Cooper to visit the Point in question.” The newspapers took the people’s side, and printed false accounts of the difficulty. Cooper demanded their retraction, and when it was not made sued the editors for libel.

The courts upheld his attitude and granted verdicts in his favour. Thereupon the Whig press of the country pounced upon him, and, not forgetful of slurs in his books upon the newspaper fraternity, said every evil thing of him which they could unearth or invent. From the portion of an unpublished letter of 1839, here reproduced in fac-simile, the reader may see not only what manner of handwriting was Cooper's, but how positive were his convictions in the matter of "The Point."

Bryant is said to have heard Cooper tell a story of a disputatious man, who was confronted in argument with the familiar speech, "Why, it is as plain as that two and two make four." "But I deny that too," was the reply, "for two and two make twenty-two." Cooper, indeed, was not wholly unlike that person. Not content with a legal verdict, he injudiciously undertook to have the last word, and to put it into the form of fiction. In 1838 appeared the two novels *Homeward Bound* and *Home as Found* which attempted to speak this word. They tell the story of an insufferable family of Effinghams who returned from abroad to their American home, and found everything here, especially the newspapers, common and unclean. The Three-Mile Point controversy entered under its very name into the circumstances of the second story, and it was impossible not to identify one of the Effinghams with Cooper himself. He was a person "whose fine,

The affair of the "Print" has been generally mis-estimated. Show more justice to the plain living man, if not indeed, to the real sinner who has done the wrong. It is not money but an opinion by my father, to put it in the hands of the man who will receive it in 1850. Certainly I cannot pocket money. That is the case. I am sure, but the affair has been compromised by circumstances that require an apology, and the money must be paid. The verdict has already been given away. The man is working for me, and must give up all other work.

Very sincerely
and truly yours

J. Fenimore Cooper

J. H. Partridge Esquire.

FAC-SIMILE, SLIGHTLY REDUCED, OF COOPER'S HANDWRITING.

curvilinear face," as we are informed on a certain page, "curled even more than usual with contempt." The writer's best friends trembled at the lack of judgment the books revealed. "I think," wrote Greenough, the sculptor, a devoted friend, "you lose your hold on the American public by rubbing down their shins with brickbats as you do." In the diary of an unprejudiced person of the time is found the frank declaration that the books were "more worthy of the talents of a silly girl than of the matured genius of the author of *The Spy* and *The Pioneers*." And verily Cooper never set forth more undeniable "salt pork."

If the books were injudicious and private opinions unfavourable, the newspapers were shameless in their reviews. They remembered old scores, and did not confine themselves to criticising the stories, but attacked the writer, his motives, and his character. This was more than Cooper could endure, and right and left he began suing the editors again for libel. They made light of the trouble at first, but as suit after suit went against them, they were sobered, and, after several years of litigation, silenced. In the trials Cooper was practically his own counsel, and pleaded his cases successfully against the best lawyers of New York State.

No editor who attacked him was too prominent to escape his demand for justice. Thurlow Weed, of the *Albany Journal*, and Horace Greeley, of the

Tribune, had to pay the piper with their humbler brethren for liberties taken with Cooper's good fame. There is a curious bit in Weed's own account of the matter. He tells us that on his way to one of the Cooper trials he picked up a new book to shorten the journey. It "proved to be Mr. Cooper's *Two Admirals*, received from New York that morning. I commenced reading it in the cars, and became so charmed with it that I took it with me into the court-room, and occupied every interval that my attention could be withdrawn from the trial in its perusal." Plaintiff and defendant have rarely faced each other under stranger conditions.

Greeley's first offence lay in printing Weed's jocular account of a suit that went against him, and the *Tribune* was promptly brought to book. The humourous pen of its editor soon raised a general laugh. "His fun," he wrote of Cooper, "did seem to us rather inhu — Hallo there! we had like to put our foot right into it again, after all our tuition." And farther on one reads: "It seemed to us, considering the present relations of the parties, most ungen — There we go again! We mean to say that the whole of this part of Mr. Cooper's speech grated upon our feelings rather harshly. We believe *that* is n't a libel. (This talking with a gag in the mouth is rather awkward at first, but we'll get the hang of it in time. Have patience with us, Fenimore, on one

side, and the Public on the other, till we nick it.)” These unfinished words—it is somewhat difficult of belief—were made the ground for a second suit against Greeley, which seems, however, not to have been pressed to a trial.

The most important suit of all was brought against the New York *Commercial Advertiser* for its review of Cooper’s admirable *Naval History*. He had tried to get at the truth about the battle of Lake Erie, and because he did not glorify the popular Commodore Perry at the expense of the unpopular Commodore Elliott, he found himself and his work ruthlessly condemned. He determined to have it shown that he had told truths, his reviewer lies. The case involved too many nice distinctions to be safe in the hands of an ordinary jury, and was entrusted to three eminent referees. There must have been a feeling of relief, by the way, among men liable to be drawn for jury duty, since in a previous case the twelve good men and true had been obliged to listen to the reading aloud of both volumes of *Home as Found*; and this case, it may be noted with little surprise, was one of the few which Cooper lost. In the *Naval History* suit, the referees heard for five days all that was to be said on each side, and after Cooper’s summing up of his own contention in a speech of remarkable skill and force, occupying in all eight hours, a verdict was returned setting the historian altogether in

the right. It was a distinguished personal victory, possible only to a strong man, who had shown himself the stronger through the very unpopularity of the course he followed to a successful end. This was in 1842, and then the newspaper attacks and suits came practically to an end. It should always be remembered that Cooper brought these suits on questions of truth, not of opinion, questions in which he and not the work of his imagination was involved; and to see the single-handed, sturdy fighter come out of the combat so clearly the winner is one of the spectacles in which the Anglo-Saxon in a man rejoices.

After this period of battle there were nearly ten years of life left to Cooper, and he did not waste them. In the midst of the lawsuits he had written *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841), completing, by supplying the first and middle portions, the sequence of stories in which he himself thought his fame had the strongest hope of continuance. Outwardly, the last years of his life were uneventful, but they were crowded with literary activity. This, however, failed to restore the popularity which for many reasons had in part deserted him. It would be foolish to suppose that Cooper was indifferent to the success of his writings. As early as 1825 his constant friend, Bryant, wrote to R. H. Dana concerning a proposed review of *The Last of the Mohicans*: "Ah, sir! he is too sensitive

a creature for me to touch. He seems to think his own works his own property instead of being the property of the public, to whom he has given them." In an unpublished letter of 1841 Cooper made the frank avowal: "I have lost most of my interest in this country." To another correspondent, in a letter also unpublished, he wrote in 1846: "If I were fifteen years younger I would certainly go abroad and never return. I can say with Wolsey, 'If I had served my God with half the zeal I've served my *country*,' it would have been better for me." Yet with all the changes which his fame suffered, the man remained the same through this last portion of his life. Those who knew him best loved him best. Those who knew him and understood him least made most of the faults, which frequently did not lie far beneath the surface. The outward show and the inner motive are often so remotely related, that it is surely fairer to attach the greater weight, in estimating a man's character, to the testimony of those who are most competent to speak. Let us remember, then, the strength of will and conviction, the loyalty to truth as he saw it—whether steadily and whole or not—the affection that gave his domestic life a constant beauty, and let the memory of his aggressiveness, his mistakes of pride and judgment, and whatever else may be unlovely, take care of itself. Let the final estimate of his qualities be what it may, it is a certainty that

when Cooper died at Otsego Hall, in 1851, lacking one day of sixty-two years, a personality of extraordinary vigour and distinction was taken from the world, and American letters lost the man through whom American books had won a wider dissemination than any other single hand had given them.

It would be idle to attempt assigning to Cooper, the chief prophet of the woods and the sea to thousands of readers in many tongues, his exact place among American writers. It is worth while, however, to recall a few of the impressions Cooper has made upon his fellow-craftsmen. His scanty endowment of humour, whether in fiction or in the conduct of life, prepares one for finding Mark Twain the most violent modern assailant of his "literary offences." The humourist easily provokes a laugh when he says, "It is a restful chapter in any book of his when somebody does n't step on a dry twig and alarm all the reds and whites for two hundred yards around. Every time a Cooper person is in peril, and absolute silence is worth four lollars a minute, he is sure to step on a dry twig." But it is the fun and not the unvarying justice of all that Mark Twain says that makes his attack readable. Others than he, equally worthy of attention, have felt differently. Balzac declares that "if Cooper had succeeded in the painting of character to the same extent that he did in the painting

of the phenomena of nature, he would have uttered the last word of our art." Last of all comes Du Maurier, bearing witness in *The Martian* to the effect of "Féimore Coupère" read aloud in French to the school-boys of the tale, and of their delight in "the beloved Bas-de-Cuir with that magic rifle of his, that so seldom missed its mark and never got out of repair." Bryant claimed for Cooper's excellences the merit of being translatable; and bright indeed they must be to have shone for Du Maurier's boys through such "ground glass of a translation" as that by which many French readers have first made the acquaintance of Cooper. The name of a country-place, "The Locusts," is Gallicised as "Les Sauterelles;" and where Cooper makes two dragoons tie their horses to locust-trees, the translator implies that locusts of the insect tribe are used as hitching-posts. Yet Du Maurier does not seem to recall Cooper as another Munchausen.

The strength of a creative artist is unlike that of a chain; it lies in the strongest, not in the weakest link. A few weeks before Irving's death, he is reported to have said of Cooper, in almost the same words he had used in writing of him eight years before: "In life they judge a writer by his last production; after death by what he has done best." And it is the Cooper of his best works, the Leather Stocking series and the saltiest sea tales, who is and will be remembered. Men forget his fail-

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ures, as they have forgotten his altercations ; but he still speaks that universal language which the young and the people of all lands comprehend, and the boyhood of American literature bids fair, in Cooper's tales, to preserve a long-enduring youth.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

THE Mayflower folk could no more have thought of John Alden and Priscilla Mullins as the central figures in a world-read poem than as the direct ancestors of two favourite American poets. Both Bryant and Longfellow had their descent from the union which Miles Standish's courtship brought about. Not only through this strain of Mayflower blood, but from many other ancestral sources, William Cullen Bryant was born — at Cummington in Western Massachusetts, November 3, 1794 — into a rightful inheritance of the New England spirit in its purest essence. To say that his father, Dr. Peter Bryant, was known about the countryside as “the beloved physician,” and that at the age of sixty he won a foot-race from a famous runner of the region, will at least suggest something of his qualities. Of Bryant's mother it is told that she kept a diary for fifty-three years without missing a day. For the day of Bryant's birth, the entry read: “Stormy. Wind N. E. Churned. Seven in the evening a son born.” If we recall also the report that when she

rode horseback, she used to spring from the ground into the saddle, we are somewhat prepared for the records of her son's vigorous longevity.

But the physical prowess of his race was not its only distinction. His father was a man of education and personal charm, and had good books in his library. He was given to verse-making himself, and the works of the best English poets were the daily food of his children, of whom, by the way, William Cullen was the second of seven. Are there any such children in this day as there were a hundred years ago? We are credibly informed, by Bryant himself, that at sixteen months he knew all the letters of the alphabet, and that his older brother, before the completion of his fourth year, "had read the Scriptures through from beginning to end." Much good they must have done him, one is tempted to interpose. Whether as a cause or an effect of precocity, the head of young Cullen, as he was called, was of such an alarming size that by his father's order he was dipped, head and all, every summer morning, into a spring near the house, the treatment being continued so late into the autumn that it was sometimes necessary to break a film of ice for the child's bath. Before he attained manhood his delicate health was left entirely behind him. →←

→←It was a stern school in which Bryant had his earliest training; but the rigours of old New Eng-

land boyhood, under teachers, parents, and on the farm, have been so often described that it need only be said here that no exceptions were made in the young poet's favour. As a young poet he very soon came to be known. When he was about ten years old his grandfather gave him a Spanish ninepenny piece for turning the first chapter of Job into verse. This grandfather, it may be said in passing, was less liberal, if more encouraging, than Tennyson's, who gave the youthful English singer half a guinea for writing some mortuary verses at his request. "Here is half a guinea for you," said the old gentleman, "the first you have ever earned by poetry, and, take my word for it, the last." Bryant earned nothing but a little local fame when the *Hampshire Gazette* of Northampton, soon after the attempt upon Job, began printing his poetical effusions, which were no worse and little better than the work of other youthful bards. It is to be remembered that the most serious early production of the boy whose chief activity in life took the form of political writing was a piece of political satire. Dr. Bryant was an ardent Federalist, and represented his party in the General Court at Boston. Jefferson and the Embargo of 1807 were anathema to all good Federalists; and in 1808 Dr. Bryant published in Boston his son's little pamphlet, *The Embargo; or, Sketches of the Times, A Satire by a Youth of Thirteen*. After the fashion

of the day the piece, bristling with invective against Jefferson and the arch-destroyer Napoleon, was fairly spirited and clever. Certainly it was a thing which few youths of thirteen could have done, and it was well enough received to bring about the printing of a second edition in 1809, which contained various other productions of the same young rhymist. It is a rare work to-day, for Bryant quite discarded it as soon as his maturer powers were proved; yet he who seeks may find it, full of Latinity and grave decorum. Spain becomes Iberia; Belgia and Helvetia step forward from the map of Europe. Even the Connecticut River winds its way as "fair Connecta" and "celebrious stream."

Such was the boy's promise that his father, sympathising from the first with his bent toward letters, chose him as the son worthy of collegiate training. His mother's brother, the Rev. Thomas Snell, equipped him with the Latin necessary for entering the Sophomore Class at Williams College, and the Rev. Moses Hallock — whose house at Plainfield, where many boys made their preparatory studies, was called the Bread and Milk College — guided him in the acquisition of Greek, and received one dollar a week for board and instruction. "I can afford it for that," he used to say, "and it would not be honest to take more." When Bryant entered Williams College, in October of 1810, there were but four men in the faculty, and the standard of

scholarship was anything but that of the modern college. Such as it was, it appears that Bryant, in spite of the burden of having brought a reputation with him, was easily equal to maintaining and increasing his good fame. But it is fatiguing to read of unbroken success, and one of the refreshing items of his college history is that, overcome by his own laughter, he broke down in an attempt to declaim a passage from Irving's *Knickerbocker*. The incident gives early proof of the gayer spirit which the dignity of his nature often hid, and, moreover, helps us to fix the sixteen-year-old boy in his historical place. *Knickerbocker's History* had appeared in 1809.

Two ambitions of Bryant's at this time were to leave Williams and enter Yale; but only the first of them was fulfilled, and that after but two terms of college work. When the time came for going to the more distant college, the family finances would not permit it. While reaching a decision to study law as the surest means of earning a support, he gave himself that best of instruction, which came from a thorough reading of his father's books. Then followed a few years of legal study in neighbouring villages, and in August of 1815 he found himself a full-fledged attorney of the Common Pleas. After a short experiment at Plainfield, he established himself, in October of 1816, as a practitioner of law in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, where he toiled faithfully for nine years.

It is not the young lawyer, but the young poet that we wish to remember; not the person who described himself as

“forced to drudge for the dregs of men,
And scrawl strange words with a barbarous pen,”

but the student, who inevitably clung to poetry as the expression of his real life. “Alas! sir,” he wrote to an older friend, “the Muse was my first love, and the remains of that passion, which is not rooted out nor chilled into extinction, will always, I fear, cause me to look coldly on the severe beauties of Themis.” It has been seen how early he fell a victim to that “first love,” and through all the days of college and law study the Muse was his true mistress. As Bryant stands almost alone among poets as one whose fame came to him while he was hardly more than a boy, and was only confirmed, not created, by the work of his later years, we may permit ourselves to look somewhat closely at his beginnings in literature.

Thanatopsis may be said to have given Bryant his place in American letters, and the story of its origin cannot be told too often. The unfailing wonder is that a boy of seventeen could have written it; not merely that he could have made verse of such structural beauty and dignity, but that the thoughts of which it is compacted could have been a boy's thoughts. The poem seems to have been written

while he was at his father's house in Cummington, in the summer of 1811, before he had definitely begun the study of law. Fond as he had been of showing his earlier effusions to his father and others, the consciousness of having done something different and greater must have come upon him at this time, for it was only by accident, six years after the writing of *Thanatopsis*, that his father chanced to find it and the poem now called "An Inscription upon the Entrance to a Wood" among some papers in a desk the boy had used while at home. Dr. Bryant read them with amazement and delight, hurried at once to the house of a neighbour, a lady of whose sympathy he felt sure, thrust them into her hands, and, with the tears running down his cheeks, said "Read them; they are Cullen's."

Now it had happened only a short time before, that Dr. Bryant had been asked in Boston to urge his son to contribute to the newly established *North American Review*, and had written him a letter on the editors' behalf. Here was the opportunity of a proud father. Without telling his son of his discovery or his purpose, he left the poems one day, together with some translations from Horace by the same hand, at the office of the *North American*. The little package was addressed to his editorial friend, Mr. Willard Phillips, of whom tradition tells us that as soon as he had read the poems he betook himself in hot haste to Cambridge to display his

treasures to his associates, Richard H. Dana and Edward T. Channing. "Ah, Phillips," said Dana, when he had heard the poems read, "you have been imposed upon! No one on this side of the Atlantic is capable of writing such verse." But Phillips, believing Dr. Bryant to be responsible for it, declared that he knew the writer, and that Dana could see him at once if he would go to the State House, in Boston. Accordingly the young men posted in to town, and Dana, unconvinced after looking long and carefully at Dr. Bryant in his seat in the Senate, said, "It is a good head, but I do not see *Thanatopsis* in it."

If any one to-day will take the trouble to look at the *North American Review* for September, 1817, he will see *Thanatopsis* in it; not as we see it now, for the opening lines, as far as the passage beginning,

"Yet a few days and thee,"

are absent, and the poem ends with the words,

"And made their bed with thee."

The noble conclusion is lacking, and in place of the introductory lines that are now familiar there are four rhymed stanzas on death that were not written as a part of *Thanatopsis* and yet have merits which would have ranked them high amongst another man's juvenilia.

To appreciate fully what the publication of such verse as *Thanatopsis* and the other Bryant poems

meant, it is worth while to look at the volume of the *North American Review* which contained them. We find ourselves carried back into the very time of 1817 by a long review of Scott's *Tales of My Landlord*, with copious extracts. In the last paragraph of the notice we read: "If Mr. Scott be the author of these works — and we scarcely doubt it — he possesses a genius as prolific and versatile as any on record. . . . If we do not err widely, he holds the tenure of his immorality [*sic*] most firmly by his novels." Evidently we have not gone back far enough to escape the unobservant proof-reader. But more significant, for our present consideration, is the sort of verse the *Review* published. It cannot be that editors who recognised so promptly the beauty of *Thanatopsis* knew no better; it must have been that, like some later editors, they had to take what they could get. What manner of thing it often was may be inferred from a single quotation. These are the opening lines of a poem "On a Painting of Colonel John Trumbull, representing a scene from Scott's 'Lady of the Lake'":

" Amid the brilliant group, which lib'ral taste
Selects to gild its mansion, and to charm
The virtuoso's eye, the landscape fair,
The form pourtray'd that from the canvas starts,
With breathing lip and feature, one there is
That mingles all this magick."

Any comment upon the difference between *Thanatopsis* and this sort of thing would of course be superfluous.

In the six years that fell between the writing and the publication of *Thanatopsis* Bryant had been constantly making verses. It was always his habit to destroy far more than he published, but this early period must not be passed without a mention of another one of the poems which could least easily be spared. It is told that in December of 1815 he was walking one day from Cummington to Plainfield — where a few years later Mr. Charles Dudley Warner was trying to milk his father's cows to the rhythm of *Thanatopsis* — when a solitary bird flew steadily across the light that had been left by the setting sun. Bryant stood and watched it till it disappeared, and at the end of his walk sat down immediately and wrote the lines "To a Waterfowl," which, appearing in 1818 in the *North American*, went far to show that the earlier poems were not merely chance shots, never to be repeated.

As a lawyer in Great Barrington we find him serious, hard-working, more fond, perhaps, of nature than of men, but highly enough esteemed of them to be appointed a tithing man and town clerk. In this second capacity it was his duty to publish all banns of marriage, which was ordinarily done by his reading them aloud in church. Instead of doing this with one notice, he pinned it on the

door of the church vestibule, where it could not be seen; yet it was the announcement, all-important to him, of his own marriage, on June 11, 1821, to Miss Frances Fairchild. How holy a day it was to him whose simple religious faith was a very real part of all his long life, is shown in a prayer for Divine blessing upon the marriage, found among his papers after death. How close the union was with her whom we are permitted to recognise as "fairest of the rural maids," and the inspiration of poems like "The Future Life" and "The Life that Is," George William Curtis has told us in saying that "his wife was his only really intimate friend, and when she died he had no other."

With all the seriousness with which Bryant took his marriage — and his father's death, celebrated in the "Hymn to Death," had just made him doubly serious — he was quite capable of writing to his mother at this time one of the letters which best reveal the vein of humour that was in him :

"DEAR MOTHER: I hasten to send you the melancholy intelligence of what has lately happened to me.

"Early on the evening of the eleventh day of the present month I was at a neighbouring house in this village. Several people of both sexes were assembled in one of the apartments, and three or four others, with myself, were in another. At last

came in a little elderly gentleman, pale, thin, with a solemn countenance, pleuritic voice, hooked nose, and hollow eyes. It was not long before we were summoned to attend in the apartment where he and the rest of the company were gathered. We went in and took our seats ; the little elderly gentleman with the hooked nose prayed, and we all stood up. When he had finished most of us sat down. The gentleman with the hooked nose then muttered certain cabalistical expressions, which I was too much frightened to remember, but I recollect that at the conclusion I was given to understand that I was married to a young lady of the name of Frances Fairchild, whom I perceived standing by my side, and I hope in the course of a few months to have the pleasure of introducing to you as your daughter-in-law, which is a matter of some interest to the poor girl, who has neither father nor mother in the world."

It was in this same year, 1821, that, through the influence of R. H. Dana, who was destined to be the poet's life-long friend and correspondent, Bryant was asked to read the annual poem before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard. To this invitation he responded with "The Ages," and the result of his visit to Boston and Cambridge was the publication of his first acknowledged volume, a small affair in bulk, but memorable as containing in its eight

poems some of the best work that Bryant ever did. This year of 1821, by the way, was a year of eminent beginnings, a date of importance in the literary history of Cooper, Halleck, Dana, Miss Sedgwick, and a half dozen others whose names mean something to the student of American letters; and only the year before — to turn again to the name which fixed the Greenwich time of our early literature — had Irving's second success, the *Sketch-Book*, appeared in its completed form.

Bryant's glimpse of Cambridge and Boston did not serve to increase his content in the practice of a profession for which he had never cared, in a community which now seemed to him smaller than ever. It is interesting to speculate, as some have done, on what would have been Bryant's development if on leaving Great Barrington he had gone to Boston instead of to New York. As we look back upon the two cities as they were seventy-five years ago, we can hardly wonder that he chose New York. Surely the men more truly representative of the time were there, and the recovery from Puritanism had not then advanced far enough to give Boston the place it was soon to take as a seat of the arts. But apart from speculations as to what might have been, the fact was that his disgust with the injustice of a decision in one of his legal cases, and the confidence of his friend, Mr. Henry Sedgwick, that his pen would earn him success in New York, fell op-

portunately together, and in 1825 we find him ardently entering upon the new, broader life.

The rewards of literature were not large in those days. Before leaving Great Barrington Bryant had been receiving two dollars each for poems contributed to the *United States Literary Gazette* in Boston. The "Forest Hymn" was one of these. Late in life Bryant was told by a friend that he had just given twenty dollars for a copy of the little Cambridge volume of 1821: "More by a long shot," said Bryant, "than I received for writing the whole work." Nor were his first enterprises in New York of a lucrative nature. As an associate editor of one magazine, long ago dead, and as a contributor to others that have departed with it, his chief reward must have been in the pleasure of the work. Probably this was true also of the lectures on Poetry and Mythology which he found opportunity to deliver. More certainly it must have been the case with his work in conjunction with his good friends, Sands and Verplanck, on the *Talisman*, one of those strange gift-book products of the younger century,—an "affection's tribute" or "friendship's offering," in which it was difficult to tell whether the text was made to illustrate the pictures, or *vice versa*. Some day an entertaining chapter of our literary annals will be written on these monuments of a superseded taste. In all these early New York days Bryant's friendships — with Cooper, for example, and the

other members of the Bread and Cheese Club— give the brighter colours to his story. The darker side was in the struggle for a livelihood. When a temporary assistant-editorship of the *Evening Post* became, in 1829, a permanent employment, he gleefully wrote to his friend Dana, "You know politics and a belly-full are better than poetry and starvation." In a few months the chief editor died, and Bryant, with a share in the ownership of the paper, was promoted to the vacant position, and here he remained until the end of his life, nearly fifty years later.

It is in part because the life of an editor is outwardly uneventful that the earlier portion of Bryant's career has been dwelt upon at a length which may seem at first thought disproportionate. Now that we may leave him established in one chair, so to speak, for half a century, there is ample time to see what manner of man he was. Such geniality as that of Irving and a few other men in whom strength and sweetness are combined does not seem to have been Bryant's possession. Not quite for the same reasons as in the case of Cooper, it was necessary to know him well in order to love him. With an endowment of reserve and equanimity which were often taken for coldness, and led Lowell to write of him :

"He is very nice reading in summer, but *inter Nos*, we don't want *extra* freezing in winter,"

he was apparently quite capable of righteous indignation, — perhaps of something more, — for in one of the poems which speak most truly from his deeper nature he writes :

“ And wrath has left its scar — that fire of hell
Has left its frightful scar upon my soul.”

This might be taken as one of those bits of self-accusation in which the most blameless of poets sometimes indulge, were it not for an incident of which his biographers make no mention. The diary of a New York gentleman tells us that he was shaving one morning, in 1831, when he saw Bryant, across the street, striking a fellow-editor, William L. Stone, with a cowhide, which Stone bore off when the bystanders had separated the combatants ; and the incident is confirmed in a volume of reminiscences more recently published. It is the more to Bryant's credit that with a natural temper, to which, under the old amenities of journalism, he could give such vigorous utterance, he attained so true a poise and dignity as time went on.

The vigour of his character is shown nowhere more clearly than in his record as an editor. As a Democrat first, as a Free Soil man and a founder of the new Republican Party in later years, he spoke through his paper's columns whatever he considered the truth, in spite of consequences that for the time were clearly disadvantageous. Once a mob threat-

ened his office, and at other times, through his opposition to the Whigs, the party of respectability, and to slavery, he forfeited nearly all claim to personal popularity; and the *Post* suffered with him. His remarks upon Nicholas Biddle's death caused Philip Hone to enter in his Diary: "How such a black-hearted misanthrope as Bryant should possess an imagination teeming with beautiful poetical images astonishes me; one would as soon expect to extract drops of honey from the fangs of the rattlesnake." But such opinions as these were merely the penalties of independence. As more of his fellow-citizens came to think as Bryant did about the tariff, — that is, as the *New York Evening Post* still thinks, — as they learned the sturdy honesty of his convictions, and felt the wise patriotism of his utterances, especially in all that related to the war, the better results of independence were shown in the editor's prosperity and honour.

Of all the many forms in which this honour came to him, the catalogue may not be given here. Public office of all sorts Bryant avoided, though the highest distinctions were put within his reach. It was to him that all men looked for the expression of the public sense of loss when such men as Cooper and Irving died. The volumes of his Memorial Addresses and of the Traveller's Letters, written to the *Post* at various times while he was abroad, tell us how little the haste of journalism was allowed to

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hurt his prose. "I would sooner the paper would go to press without an editorial article," he once said to an associate, "than send to the printer one I was not satisfied with." What the newspaper doubtless

New York March 31, 1876

Dear Sir,

I have made a paragraph of
the information - the printed extracts - sent
me in your letter concerning your Dictionary
of Congress & Biographical Annals.

This poem in *Immortality* is an
old affair, it appeared some fifteen or
twenty years since, under my name and
after a while I was obliged, in self defence,
to disclaim its authorship, as it was not
written by me.

Yours truly,
W. C. Bryant

REDUCED FAC-SIMILE OF AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY BRYANT.

helped him to achieve was a quickness of mental working, which stood him in good stead when in later life he was often called upon to acknowledge public compliments. We can hardly think he took joy of all the tributes to his fame. To be exhibited

as he was by the Governor of New York to both houses of the Legislature at Albany in 1875 must have been a rather melancholy pleasure, however fully he deserved his introduction as "the most distinguished citizen of our State." Yet the happy word of acknowledgment always came to his lips. There was never a better instance of this than in the anecdote with which he began his thanks for a silver vase given him by national subscription in honour of his eightieth birthday. He told of the presentation of a silver pitcher to an English militia officer; the spokesman for the company, losing his self-possession, could say nothing but: "Captain, here's the jug;" to which the captain, in a similar plight, replied: "Aye, is that the jug?" Of course the likeness between Bryant and the captain stopped there, for a most graceful speech followed.

Yet our heartiest liking for the man comes from other sources than his public fame. His letters to friends, and such knowledge of his private life as Mr. Parke Godwin, his son-in-law and most complete biographer, has given to all who care to read, reveal the health, simplicity, and devotion of a nature which was not ill described by him who called Bryant a "Puritan Greek." A strong part of the health of this nature was in its love of health. The child who was dipped in the Cummington spring preserved his bodily vigour in later years by rising

early enough in the morning to exercise with dumb-bells, pole, and horizontal bar for an hour or more before breakfast, by adhering to a diet of Spartan simplicity, by walking, rain or shine, to and from his office, three miles from his house in town, and by getting as near to nature in his life as he tried always to come in his poems. Only a few weeks before his death, his second biographer, the Hon. John Bigelow, asked him if he never varied even then from his earlier rules of exercise. "Not the width of your thumb-nail," was the reply. In a shorter account of his life than Mr. Bigelow's, another writer tells of walking with Bryant in the country, when the aged poet swung himself to and fro on the low branch of a tree until he had momentum enough to clear a fence, which he did without touching it. The occasion would almost have warranted some use of the appeal to Lewis Carroll's "Father William," — "do you think at your age it is right?" Evidently the unbroken city life was not for such a man, and as early as 1843 he became the owner of "Cedar-mere," a place in the Long Island town of Roslyn, so named by the poet himself from the fact that the British, evacuating the island in 1781, had marched away from this particular region to the tune of "Roslyn Castle." Minute directions for transplanting blackberry bushes, written from Europe in 1857, are but one of the evidences of the thought he gave to his country place. A visitor has recorded another

item that should not be forgotten. The gardener had nearly sawed off the limb of a tree, on which Mr. Bryant happened to notice a bird's nest. He stopped the man's work at once, and by an interlacing of ropes had the limb fastened into its place until the young birds the nest had sheltered could shift for themselves. Neither to Roslyn nor to Cummington, where Bryant, in 1865, purchased his father's house, would he bring or do a line of his newspaper work. But each of these towns possesses to-day — one in a public hall, the other in a library, the gifts of the poet — substantial proof that he did not regard the country as a place for letting the mind lie fallow.

Bryant's quiet Christian belief was intimately an element of his nature. Throughout his life it found expression in public and private word and deed. Yet it was not until 1858, when Mrs. Bryant was dangerously ill at Naples, that he united himself definitely with any body of Christians. The account which the Rev. R. C. Waterston, of the Unitarian Church, has left of the poet's baptism in a "large upper room," overlooking the bay, brings up a picture of apostolic simplicity and beauty.

A few months later Hawthorne met Bryant at the house of the Brownings in Florence. Mrs. Bryant's illness was felt to be inevitably fatal in time, and Hawthorne, knowing this, wrote a few

words, which for shrewdness of insight have a value all their own: "I take him to be one who cannot get closely home to his sorrow, nor feel it so sensibly as he gladly would; and in consequence of that deficiency, the world lacks substance to him. It is partly the result, perhaps, of his not having sufficiently cultivated his emotional nature. His poetry shows it, and his personal intercourse, though kindly, does not stir one's blood in the least." Making some necessary allowance for Hawthorne's never having known Bryant well, the analyst of character and poetry might extend this speculation far into a study of Bryant; but he should not forget that Hawthorne pointed out the way.

It was like a man of Bryant's well-disciplined spirit to fill with a great task the hours of desolation that followed his wife's death in 1866. This task was the translation of Homer, and between 1866 and 1871, holding himself to the rule of forty lines a day, he had put both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into the English verse through which they are now probably best known to American readers.

There has been no attempt here to keep up a chronological account of Bryant's poetical work after its first specimens showed what it was constantly to be. There were other literary undertakings, largely editorial, which we need not even stop to name. But we should give at least a moment to the thought that Bryant's work in one

important respect separates itself from the work of many other men. It can almost always be shown how their books reflect the circumstances of their lives; what we see in Bryant's legacy to us is that he was a poet in spite of circumstance. It may be objected that the best writing of any sort is the most autobiographic, but surely it is one thing to draw upon our daily lives for the scenes and incidents of prose, and it is quite another to live each day a busy life of affairs, and yet leave the world the richer for pages of print which give to the life of the spirit its true pre-eminence.

Perhaps Bryant's strongest appeal to the human mind is in his view of death, his thanatopsis, if his special word may be made a general term. It was fitting, therefore, that death should come to him when, of all men, he must have been most ready to meet it. Honours and years were his in abundance, and with them his mind and body held undiminished vigour. On May 29, 1878, he delivered an address at the unveiling of the Mazzini statue in Central Park. The heat was great, and Mr. Bryant showed fatigue after his speech was done. Yet he insisted on walking across the Park, in acceptance of an invitation to the house of a friend, who, stepping before him to unlock the front door, heard a fall, and turned to see Mr. Bryant lying on the upper step, on which his head had struck with vio-

lence. Unconsciousness followed, and, taken to his own house, No. 24 West Sixteenth Street, he died on June 12th, having entered the second half of his eighty-fourth year. When he was buried at Roslyn, a few days later, the reading of his poem "June" was a part of the service. Indeed, it could hardly have been omitted.

By reason of his long-continued life, Bryant seems nearer to our own day than, as a poet, he really is. Historically he must be remembered as the first of American poets, — first in poetry as Irving was first in one form of prose, and Cooper in another. The body of his poetic work is small, and the greater portion of it is manifestly destined to be forgotten. But with *Thanatopsis* and the handful of other lines which seem framed for a longer existence, shall we not preserve our memories of the man himself? For the celebration of his seventieth birthday Whittier wrote a poem in which there is a stanza telling one truth about Bryant so accurately that we cannot do better than to leave him with the good Friend's words :

" We praise not now the poet's art,
The rounded beauty of his song ;
Who weighs him from his life apart
Must do his nobler nature wrong."



A EUROPEANISED POE.
From a rare French etching.

tion were not obvious. It is now felt that Griswold in the main told the truth, though sometimes without kindness or discretion. In the present sketch Mr. Woodberry's statements are accepted as authoritative.

Why should the old, unpleasant stories be told again at all? "Why do you have the same old toys for sale every Christmas?" a lady once asked a shopkeeper; "why don't you get some new ones?" "Madam," was the reply, "there are always new babies." And there are always new readers—and some old ones with short memories. For both of these classes, and for more besides, Poe's tales and poems are eternally new; and some knowledge of the man who produced them bears essentially upon the fulness of their meaning.

If we were to adopt Poe's own stories of himself we should have to give him in the first place several birthdays, each later than the actual one. This was January 19, 1809, and, as if his life began with contradictions, Boston, the city of his detestation, was his birthplace. But his mother was an actress — Elizabeth Arnold — whom his father, David Poe, the son of an excellent Maryland family, had married against the wishes of his people; and it is the fortune of the children of the theatre to be born "upon the road." It was Poe's misfortune that his mother died in Richmond when he was less than three years old; his father had already

quitted the scene. The three children of the marriage were adopted by benevolent friends and relatives, Edgar falling into the care of the childless wife of a wealthy merchant of Richmond, whose name of Allan the boy received. It could not have been foreseen that the ill-starred waif might almost as well have been left to shift for himself.

Through his boyhood there was no lack of kindness in the treatment his foster parents bestowed upon him. They were proud of his good looks and precocity, and gave him the best of schooling, first in Richmond, and then, during their stay abroad, for five years at the Manor House School, Stoke Newington, a London suburb. Here the headmaster observed merely that the boy was clever, but injured by "an extravagant amount of pocket money." Poe's story of "William Wilson" is said to record his own remembrances of the school. He was brought back to Richmond in 1820, and there for seven years under the best auspices pursued his studies preparatory to entering the University of Virginia.

It is worth remarking that in this schoolboy period Poe made no friends. He was at once sensitive and supercilious, desirous of a regard he did not excite, and quick to show his contempt for wits less keen than his own. These qualities he never outgrew, and for the life he was destined to lead they provided as poor an equipment as one can well

imagine. One strong attachment which he did form at this time, however, is equally noticeable for the quality it foreshadowed. It was his romantic devotion to the young and beautiful mother of one of his schoolmates. Poe never ceased to crave the society of women who could "understand" him; and when this lady of Richmond, after winning the boy's heart by her tenderness, died an early death, the young dreamer would go to her grave by night, and brood by day upon the bitterness of his loss. She seems to have been his first Lenore.

Of the youth who was capable of such feelings one does not expect precisely the record Poe made for himself at the University of Virginia, which he entered in February of 1826. To be sure, when his university career ended in less than a year, he took with him the highest honours in Latin and French; but he left behind him gambling debts to the amount of twenty-five hundred dollars and a reputation as an extraordinary drinker. "It was not the *taste* of the beverage that influenced him," a college contemporary has written; "without a sip or a smack of the mouth he would seize a full glass, without water or sugar, and send it home at a single gulp." But the cards were his destruction at college, and it was no wonder that Mr. Allan declined to send him back to Charlottesville.

The alternative for college life was a clerkship in Mr. Allan's office, and it was a matter of course

that Poe could not long submit to the drudgery of it. If again we were to adopt his own account of himself, at least as he authorised it in biographical sketches of a later date, we should have to follow him now to Greece, where, according to the mythical story, he went, like Byron, to fight for liberty; we should find him, too, in St. Petersburg, involved in some mysterious trouble, from which he was extricated only by the help of the American consul. The real, if less romantic, truth appears to be that going forth from Richmond to seek his fortunes in the world, he soon found himself in poverty in Boston, where an obscure publisher printed for him in 1827 an obscure little volume, "*Tamerlane, and Other Poems*, by a Bostonian," a single copy of which was sold in 1892 for \$1,850. The inference from the fact that the publisher in later life never associated the book with the famous name of Poe is that the unknown singer was making use of another name. This inference is borne out by the enlistment at Boston of Edgar A. Perry, on May 26, 1828, as a private in the United States Army, and by the identification of this young soldier, who soon became a sergeant-major, with Edgar A. Poe. This person, Poe or Perry, was granted leave of absence from Fortress Monroe when Mrs. Allan, Poe's benefactress, died in Richmond, early in 1829; and it was Mr. Allan who applied for it, and a little later was instrumental in bringing about

his foster-son's admission as a cadet to the Academy at West Point. It was doubtless a relief to the respectable merchant to feel that he had thus done his duty by the young man, with whom his sense of kinship had been growing year by year less intimate.

It was in 1830 that Poe entered West Point, having published in Baltimore in the year before a second little volume of poems. Though his age was recorded at the Academy as nineteen, it was the face of a man of more than the twenty-one years he had really lived that his fellow-cadets learned to know. It was their jest to say that he had secured an appointment for his son, and, the boy having died, he had come to take his place. It was no great wonder that Poe bore the look of age before his time. Estranged from those who had tried to help him, solitary, sensitive, and poor, and endowed by nature with a spirit which, from first to last, preyed remorselessly upon itself,—what was there to give his face the look of youth? And how could such an one have been expected to adapt himself to a life in which self-effacement is the first rule? It made no difference that Poe had chosen for himself the military profession. He soon tired of it, and deliberately brought about his own expulsion from the Academy. Perhaps this was rendered the easier by his reckless habits through the six months of his cadetship. His literary

tendencies were well known at West Point, and there is a certain irony in the fact that a third little book of verse, which a New York publisher undertook on the strength of the cadets' support, distinctly disappointed the subscribers because it was not made up of local squibs.

Poe's worldly prospects, when he made his way from West Point to Baltimore, were certainly far from bright. Mr. Allan had married a second wife, and the birth of a son soon dispelled every hope Poe might have entertained of coming into the property which as a boy he had had some reason to count upon. There was nothing for him but to live by his own wits, and for a time the living he made was of the barest. Happily for him, a Baltimore paper, *The Saturday Visiter*, offered in 1833 some prizes in money for the best contributions in prose and verse. Poe's story of "The Manuscript Found in a Bottle" won him a hundred dollars, and his poem "The Coliseum" would have been awarded the first place in its class also had it not been thought unwise to give two prizes to one man. The success was of the greatest importance to Poe, for it secured him the influential friendship of John P. Kennedy, through which, in turn, he secured the associate editorship of the *Southern Literary Messenger*, a new magazine in Richmond. This was not until 1835, and in the mean time Poe had been reduced to the narrowest straits of poverty.

On one occasion he had been obliged to decline Mr. Kennedy's invitation to dinner, because of his "personal appearance."

But all was changed in Richmond, where his new duties called him. His remarkable talents as an editor did wonders for the circulation of the *Messenger*; and his own pen, departing from the traditions of commonplace in fiction and criticism, spread his fame abroad. There was, moreover, almost for the only time in Poe's troublous life, a sufficiency of income for his needs. They were not great, although in September of 1835, feeling himself unable to part with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, and her daughter, Virginia, with whom he had lived in Baltimore, he had privately married his young cousin. How young she was all the world did not know; for when the public marriage took place in Richmond, in May, 1836, Poe's bondsman — under the marriage law — declared on oath that Virginia Clemm was "of the full age of twenty-one years." In reality she was not quite fourteen, and Poe was about twice her age. If this marriage with a child was ominous of evil, the future brought some fulfilment of good in the relations of sonship and motherhood which Poe and Mrs. Clemm bore to each other through life with a peculiar tenderness. A weak man never needed the help of a strong woman more than Poe needed it, and as it was never to come from his wife, it was well that her mother could

also be truly his. The fortunate circumstances of Poe's life were few enough. This was one of them.

Prosperity now seemed easily within reach of the small family in Richmond. Its revenues were increased by the keeping of a few boarders, and apparently all would have gone well except for Poe himself. But before he had left Baltimore his habits — or freaks — of intemperance had begun to get him into trouble. It is better to call them **freaks**, for it does not appear that they were habitual. No man so susceptible to stimulants could have indulged in them habitually and have done one half the work that Poe did in the world. It is Mrs. Clemm's testimony that a single cup of coffee would intoxicate him. For such a man the obvious thing to do was to shun liquor as he would shun the plague; but this, at least for periods of any length, Poe had neither the will nor the courage to do. The prostration which followed each attack of intemperance was rendered the more complete by his use of opiates. It was as if he did his best to incapacitate both body and spirit. These, in a word, were the conditions under which much of his mature life was led. That they had begun to affect his work as early as in the Richmond days we are clearly informed by a letter to Poe from Mr. White, the proprietor of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. Its spirit of expostulation is of the kindest, and a single sentence, if it is based

upon fact, shows in what need of good advice Poe already stood : " No man is safe that drinks before breakfast." It is unnecessary to quote more or to wonder that the first number of the magazine for 1837 made the announcement that Poe's connection with it had ceased.

It would be a sorrowful progress to follow Poe through all his vicissitudes. There is a monotony of pity in the spectacle of the man entering with courage upon new editorial ventures, making surely for success through weeks or months, winning the admiration of his associates, and then, suddenly or by degrees, failing with a completeness which rendered the brave hope of each beginning only the more tragic. Such, in a general way, were his experiences with Burton's *Gentleman's Magazine* and its successor, *Graham's Magazine*, in Philadelphia, where, after a short sojourn in New York, he lived from 1838 until 1844. Pursuing through all these dark days the *ignis fatuus* of a magazine of his own, he was nevertheless taking his place more and more firmly as a prose writer of the first popularity. As a poet he was hardly known, but his stories and reviews in magazines, and his excellently well-named volume of 1840, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, had secured him a general esteem quite out of keeping with the sordidness of his personal circumstances. It was in this period not only that his story of " The Gold Bug " won him his second prize of a hundred

PROSPECTUS

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THE PENN MAGAZINE.

A MONTHLY LITERARY JOURNAL,

TO BE EDITED AND PUBLISHED IN THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

BY EDGAR A. POE.

To you, *MY READERS*—those respecting the conduct of *The Southern Literary Messenger*, at the commencement of its third year, I have had charge in view the establishment of a Magazine which should reach some of the chief features that I desired, combining or partly supplying the rest. Doubt, however, has been occasioned by a variety of causes, and not until now have I found myself at liberty to attempt the execution of the design.

I will be pardoned for speaking more directly of *The Messenger*, viewing it in its proprietary right, my objects too being at rest, since in many respects with those of its very worthy successor. I found difficulty in clamping upon its pages that individuality which I believe essential to the full success of all similar publications. In regard to their prominent influence, it appears to me that a consistent definite character, and a marked certainty of purpose, are desiderata of vital importance, and only attainable when one united them to the general direction of the undertaking. Experience has rendered obvious, what might indeed have been demonstrated a priori, that in founding a Magazine of my own I see the only chance of carrying out to completion whatever peculiar intention I may have entertained.

To those who remember the early days of the Southern, proffered in question it will be scarcely necessary to say that its main feature was a somewhat exclusive courtesy in its department of Critical Notices of new books. *The Penn Magazine* will retain this kind of courtesy in as much only as the coherent yet sterner cause of Justice will permit. Some years since elapsed may have witnessed down the pathward without interfering with the rigor of the critic. Most rarely they have not yet taught him to read through the medium of a publisher's will, nor convinced him that the interests of letters are unalike with the interests of truth. It shall be the first and chief purpose of the Magazine now proposed to involve letters as one whose may be found at all times, and upon all subjects, of honest and a further opinion. It shall be a leading object to assert in prompt, and to maintain in practice the rights, while in effect it demonstrates the advantages, of an absolutely independent criticism—a criticism self-contained; guiding itself only by the general rules of Art; analyzing and trying these rules as it applies them; holding itself clear from all personal bias; acknowledging no one else that of judging the right; yielding no point either to the vanity of the author, or to the assumptions of antique pedantry, or to the haste and mysterious cost of the Quarterly, or to the aversion of those engaged editors which, heaping the nightmar upon American literature, manufacture, at the end of our principal bookshelves, a pseudo-public-opinion by wholesale. These are objects of which no man need be ashamed. They are purposes, moreover, whose novelty at least will give them interest. For assurance that I will follow all these in the best spirit and to the very letter, I appeal with confidence to the many thousands of my friends, and especially of my Southern friends, who sustained me in the *Messenger*, where I had but a very partial opportunity of completing my own plan.

In respect to the other features of the *Penn Magazine*, a few words here will suffice. It will endeavor to support the general interests of the republic of letters, without reference to particular regions; regarding the world at large as the true audience of the critic. Beyond the products of literature, properly so called, it will have in better hands the task of instruction upon all matters of every grade moment. Its aim chiefly shall be to please; and this through means of simplicity, originality, and progress. It may be as well here to observe that nothing said in this Prospectus should be construed into a design of supplying the Magazine with any features of the literary, scientific, or political, which are the mainstays of some of the most celebrated of the European journals. In all branches of the literary department, the best aid, from the highest and purest sources, is desired.

To the mechanical execution of the work the greatest attention will be given which such a matter can require. In this regard it is proposed to surpass, by very much, the ordinary Magazine style. The form will nearly resemble that of *The Edinburgh Review*; the paper will be equal to that of *The North American Review*; the planished embossedness will be numerous, and by the leading notes of the country, but will be introduced only in the necessary illustration of the text.

The *Penn Magazine* will be published in Philadelphia, on the first of each month, and will form, bi-monthly, a volume of about 200 pages. The price will be \$4 per annum, payable in advance, or upon the receipt of the first number, which will be issued on the first of January, 1841. Letters addressed to the Editor and Proprietor,

EDGAR A. POE. *Poe*.

REDUCED FAC-SIMILE OF THE PROSPECTUS OF
"THE PENN MAGAZINE."

Philadelphia,

Sep. 16. 1840.

Dear Sir,

Your kind letter, with the names of nine subscribers to the Penn Magazine, has only this moment reached me, as I have been out of town for the last week. I hope you will think me sincere when I say that I am truly grateful for the interest you have taken in my welfare. A few more such friends as yourself, and I shall have no reason to doubt of success.

What you say about "The Devil's Visit to St Dunstan" gives me great pleasure. I was thinking in what manner I should ask of you some such favor as you propose in sending me this true history but was afraid of making too many demands at once upon your good nature. Your offer, therefore, most à propos I shall look anxiously for the tale, and will assuredly be proud to give it a conspicuous place in the opening number of the Magazine.

With high respect, I am,

Yours,

Edgar Poe

Wm Tomlin Esq

dollars, but that he wrought the wonders in cryptography which — save the mark! — might have made a Baconian of him to-day, and that he foretold from the opening chapters the conclusion of *Barnaby Rudge*, a feat which caused Dickens to inquire if Poe were the Devil. But the substantial value of such successes as these was small, and in 1844, hoping again to better himself by change, he transferred the scene of his struggles to New York.

There was editorial work to be done on the *Evening Mirror*, conducted by N. P. Willis, and Poe was given the opportunity of doing it. Willis was all kindness and forbearance, and has testified heartily to Poe's regularity and efficiency through all their intercourse. But "Willis was too Willis for him," as another editor expressed it, and Poe, before a year was out, went through the unfamiliar proceeding of leaving an employer who was sorry to have him go. Before the end of 1845 his next venture was a thing of the past. He had joined with C. F. Briggs in the management of the *Broadway Journal*, had become proprietor of the paper, and had had to give it up, all within about ten months. In the course of this time, during which, by the way, his one-sided "war" with Longfellow for plagiarism was at its height, he lost the friendship of Lowell, through whom Briggs and he had been brought together, and supplied Horace Greeley, who had lent



Edgar A. Poe.

From the engraving of a pastel portrait by Oscar Halling, after
a daguerreotype.

Many of his judgments about the most important men of his day, as, for example, his immediate recognition of Hawthorne's genius, showed that the true critical faculty was in him. That he did not always exercise it sincerely we may infer from his answer to a protest against his high praise, in print, of the productions of somebody defined by a reminiscent friend as a "lady writer": "It is true," he said, "she is really commonplace; but her husband was kind to me; I cannot point an arrow against any woman." Something of the same disingenuousness, to call it here by no harsher name, permitted him to sell several times over, often in slightly varied forms, the works of his pen, and to dedicate the same verses to successive ladies as occasion arose. It made the less matter, however, at the time with which we are now concerned, for he had written "The Raven," first printed in the *Evening Mirror*, January 29, 1845, from advance sheets of the February number of the *American Whig Review*; and though the commercial value of the poem is said by some to have been ten, by others five dollars, its effect was to carry Poe's name into every corner of the land. He whose reputation had been based almost entirely upon prose suddenly found himself known high and low as a poet.

Neither his fame nor the publication of two volumes in 1845, *Tales* and *The Raven and Other Poems*, made him less than usually an object of pity. Most

of the time he was desperately poor, and worse than poverty was the condition described in this letter of his own — read it as you will — written in 1848: “Six years ago, a wife, whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood-vessel in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever, and underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially, and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel broke again. I went through precisely the same scene. . . . Then again — again — and even once again, at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death — and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly and clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive — nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank, — God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink, rather than the drink, to the insanity.”

In 1846 Poe, with Virginia and Mrs. Clemm, had moved to Fordham, near New York City, and established himself in the well-known cottage which recently has had to make way for a trolley road. His interrupted writing brought the scantiest returns in money. By the autumn of this year it was felt that Mrs. Poe's last illness was upon her.

A visitor has described the scene in the cottage:
“There was no clothing on the bed, which was only straw, but a snow-white counterpane and sheets. The weather was cold, and the sick lady had the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever of consumption. She lay on the straw bed, wrapped in her husband’s great-coat, with a large tortoise-shell cat in her bosom. The wonderful cat



POE'S COTTAGE AT FORDHAM, N. Y.

seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the sufferer’s only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands and her mother her feet.”

Poe himself was only a little less ill, with poverty and dread; and when Virginia died, in January of 1847, the good women who cared for him nearly despaired of his recovery. There were always good women to care for Poe. To Mrs. Clemm Poe himself well knew what he owed, as the lines “To

My Mother” continue to tell the world; and it is well worth while to repeat the pathetic words which Willis wrote of her in the *Home Journal* after Poe himself had died: “Winter after winter, for years, the most touching sight to us, in this whole city, has been that tireless minister to genius, thinly and insufficiently clad, going from office to office with a poem, or an article on some literary subject, to sell,—sometimes simply pleading in a broken voice that he was ill, and begging for him—mentioning nothing but that ‘he was ill,’ whatever might be the reason for his writing nothing,—and never, amid all her tears and recitals of distress, suffering one syllable to escape her lips that could convey a doubt of him, or a complaint, or a lessening of pride in his genius and good intentions.”

At this crisis of Virginia’s death it was a Mrs. Shew who, after Mrs. Clemm, was most to Poe. To her we are said to owe “The Bells.” The story runs that in one of Poe’s visits to her house he said that he had to write a poem, and complained of his total lack of inspiration for it. The sound of church bells prompted her, in spite of his irritation at the noise they were making, to write at the top of a piece of paper, “The Bells, by E. A. Poe.” Then, as a first line, she jotted down “The bells, the little silver bells,” and after Poe had done one stanza, wrote “The heavy iron bells” for him in the same way; having finished this stanza, he

wrote above them both "By Mrs. M. L. Shew," and handed her the manuscript. This was a pretty bit of fooling, but it lacked the warmth which Poe wished always to infuse into his friendships with women, — a warmth which soon afterwards put an end to his intimacy with Mrs. Shew. Another of his women friends has left the record of Poe's own declaration that in his wife, gentle, devoted, and beautiful as she was, he missed "a certain intellectual and spiritual sympathy," — a lack which he was always willing to let the women who "understood" him try to supply. After Virginia's death these intimacies took a conspicuous place in the spectacle of his woefully shattered life.

Poe made no mystery of his affection for sympathetic women. Such lines as those "To Annie," a lady of Lowell, and the longer poem, "To Helen," strike the personal note with an unmistakable clearness. "Helen" was herself a maker of verse, — Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, of Providence, Rhode Island, — and before she had actually met with Poe wrote and printed verses to him. In 1848 he made desperate efforts to marry her, and if her head had not remained as completely hers as her heart seems to have been his, she would doubtless have become Mrs. Poe. Griswold's story of their final interview was cruelly untrue, although it is evident that Poe's indulgence in his besetting sins at the very time and place when he should have

been most himself put an end to his hopes in Providence. Apparently he was acting at the time upon the advice of Mrs. Shew to save himself by marriage. One is not surprised, therefore, to find him in 1849 ardently wooing a wealthy widow of Richmond, a Mrs. Shelton, with whom as Miss Sarah Elmira Royster he, as a boy, had had romantic dealings. One suspects that the romance was quite of the past, and the suspicion is borne out by a portion of a letter which Poe wrote from Richmond to Mrs. Clemm at Fordham, after he had secured the promise of Mrs. Shelton's prosperous hand :

“ And now, dear Muddy, there is one thing I wish you to pay particular attention to. I told Elmira when I first came here, that I had one of the pencil-sketches of her, that I took a long while ago in Richmond ; and I told her that I would write to you about it. So when you write just copy the following words in your letter : ‘ I have looked again for the pencil-sketch of Mrs. S., but cannot find it anywhere. I took down all the books and shook them one by one, and, unless Eliza White has it, I do not [know] what has become of it. She was looking at it the last time I saw it. The one you spoilt with Indian Ink ought to be somewhere about the house. I will do my best to find it.’ ”

We could gladly dispense with the discovery of such letters as this one, written in the last month of Poe's life. It is needless to comment upon it or

the state of unhealth which it reveals. It is for the psychologist to confer with the physiologist and to divide the blame for Poe's condition between his spirit and his body. He himself once wrote to a friend: "You will find yourself puzzled in judging me by ordinary motives." And if he had been any one else, a fortunate ending to the Richmond visit could almost surely have been predicted. He was lionised by old and new friends. The two lectures which he gave were greatly successful. He was full of hope for the success of his long-desired magazine, *The Stylus*. Yet twice during the visit he yielded to his passion for liquor, and the doctors told him that if he did so but once again it would kill him. With this knowledge he started for the North to arrange some business matters preliminary to his marriage. It is difficult to trace his footsteps with certainty from the time he left Richmond, apparently on Sunday night, September 30, 1849, until Wednesday afternoon, when he was found helpless in a Baltimore polling booth, which was also a rumshop. As the day is said to have been that of election, the supposition is that he had been seized by politicians and made to vote at many polls. When his friends found him, he was taken to the Washington Hospital, where, after four days of delirium, he died on Sunday, October 7th, saying, "Lord, help my poor soul." The doctor who attended him has within recent years published his opinion that Poe was drugged and not intoxicated

when he was brought to the hospital; and so with contradictions, as at the beginning, his life ended.

Except that he was an erect, military-looking person, not tall, but well formed, with clear, responsive eyes, and of a melancholy countenance, hardly anything can be said of Poe which somebody will not stand ready to contradict. The effect even of his personal appearance upon men and upon women was totally different, and to women we are indebted for the descriptions which endow his presence with the strongest charm.

As of the man, so of his work; the differences of the opinion it has excited are as wide as the world. To Emerson he was merely the "jingle-man," and Emerson's was not an isolated belief. For many of our friends in France and our English kinsmen, as for some of us at home, he stands with the supreme few in American letters. It has been possible here to glance merely at some of the conspicuous events of his ill-controlled life. An infinite deal, perhaps of equal interest, has been omitted. Many pages would be needed to discuss to any purpose his familiar definition of poetry as the "rhythmical creation of beauty," his insistence, in and out of season, that long poems do not exist, and the large significance of his work in criticism, fiction, and poetry. Happily there is no dearth of suggestive comment upon all these themes. Nearly all we know and all we need to know about them is

gathered into the biography by Mr. Woodberry, and the complete edition of Poe which he and Mr. E. C. Stedman have recently prepared.

When one has read all there is to be said about the man and his work, and has done a little thinking for one's self, a few considerations make themselves reasonably clear. In the first place, one abandons the foolish thought of "what might have been." In his life of the spirit Poe was a dweller in misty borderlands ; in the flesh he was a highly developed Bohemian in the midst of respectability. If he had been something else, in either regard, he simply would not have been Poe, and the different works of a different man would have been his contribution to literature. He must be taken as he was, and so taken, with all his imperfections on his head, he is yet of those who make us feel the rigour of the line that is drawn between talent and genius. We feel a reasonable confidence in placing him on the higher side of the line, and our confidence goes little further. It carries us far enough in one direction, however, to make us disagree with a dictum of Poe's ambitious philosophical work, *Eureka*, that as man cannot conceive of a being superior to himself, man is therefore God. We are glad of the disagreement, for since judgment is an attribute of deity, and since we are merely human, the necessity for rendering final verdicts upon such fellow-beings as Edgar Allan Poe is happily removed.

WILLIS, HALLECK, AND DRAKE

IN the *Letters from Under a Bridge*, by N. P. Willis, which is to-day, perhaps, the most readable of his many volumes, these suggestive words may be found: "In what is the judgment of posterity better than that of contemporaries? Simply in that the author is seen from a distance, — his personal qualities lost to the eye and his literary stature seen in proper relief and proportion." Having thus delivered himself, Willis proceeds to assert, on the very next page, "Rufus Dawes is a poet if God ever created one." It is as if an evil genius of consistency had guided Willis's pen into writing the very words which should best prove the worthlessness of contemporary opinion, for Rufus Dawes lives to-day — if it can be called living — only in dusty anthologies and in the pages which Poe devoted to an unmerciful exposure of his shortcomings. For our own generation it cannot be said that Willis himself has any vital importance, yet he cut a prodigious figure in his own time; and while he was extolling the beauties of Dawes, Poe would probably have been only too glad to take the humble place which a few

years later he filled for a time as Willis's office assistant. Now that Willis's fleet of books is fastened almost as securely to "Lethe wharf" as the works of Dawes himself, it is not without suggestion to recall and contrast the esteem in which he and Poe were respectively held by the reading public of their time. Poe's literary stature had not begun to be seen in proper relief and proportion. Willis's was of the sort which, from its very adaptation to the taste of the day, had all its greatness then, and now has dwindled almost out of being. It will not be possible to note all the contrasts between his career and Poe's, but they can hardly fail to present themselves to minds familiar with the more tragic story of the writer whose fame has not died.

Nathaniel Parker Willis came of a family that had printer's ink in its veins. His grandfather, whose ancestors were among the earliest English emigrants to Massachusetts, conducted a patriotic journal in Boston during the Revolution, and afterward established newspapers in Virginia and Ohio. His son Nathaniel, who is still recalled in Boston as "Deacon Willis" of the Park Street Church, founded the Boston *Recorder*, which he declared to be the first religious newspaper in the world, and the *Youth's Companion*, which, beginning as a distinctly religious journal for children, was probably also the pioneer in its field. Deacon Willis's wife was Hannah Parker, and to the piety which she

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shared with her husband her brighter spirit added the quality of gaiety which their son, Nathaniel Parker, the second of nine children, could not possibly have inherited from his rigorous father. This boy, the Willis with whom we are now concerned, was born in Portland, Maine, on January 20, 1806, about a year before Longfellow's birth in the same town.

From the strict orthodoxy of his father's household it was natural that the son should be sent first to the school at Andover and then to Yale College. At Andover he took an active part in a religious revival, of which it would be hard to find the parallel in a modern boarding-school. "Prayer ascends continually," wrote Willis at seventeen to his father, "sinners are repenting, and I am as proud as Lucifer. . . . Oh, pray that I may have humility! It is and must be the burden of my supplications." As to the influence of Yale at the time Willis was in college, he subsequently wrote that the student was "committed to the sincere zealots of Connecticut . . . to learn Latin and Greek, if it pleased Heaven, but the mysteries of 'election and free grace,' whether or no." Before Willis had been long under this system of instruction he found that there were many other things to learn. The name he won for himself while still a collegian, by writing a few of his most popular scriptural poems and other verses of an interest more strictly local, ren-

dered him something of a lion in undergraduate society, and his good looks and attractive manners made it easily possible for him to play his leonine part with success and satisfaction. Accordingly, without developing any tendencies that could be called dangerous, he soon found himself leading a life of social pleasure which placed him in his father's eyes among "the world's people," and made Willis himself conscious of what he called an "enduring conviction of sin." Yet the conviction was not overpowering, and indeed could hardly have been "enduring," for the Willis of these college days, concerned with the less serious side of life, pleased with the bright colour of things, and never probing too deeply into strenuous realities, was the Willis of the later years.

For four years after leaving college—that is, from 1827 to 1831—he was an inmate of his father's house in Boston. Here he served the editorial apprenticeship which prepared him for most of his work in the world. He edited the annuals *The Legendary* and *The Token* for S. G. Goodrich, "Peter Parley," and attempted a magazine, the *American Monthly*, on his own account. Already he showed himself essentially a journalist. Annual, monthly, and daily periodicals were his inevitable mediums of expression, and to know the nature of the periodical literature of his time it is only necessary to know Willis, and *vice-versâ*. It

was the period of steel engraving in illustrative art ; and the greater portion of Willis's work, then and later, seems now to bear about the same relation to life as these pictures of skies in which thunder-storms were always gathering, and of persons through whose faces the blandness or malignity of undoubted saints or villains was sure to shine.

No poems that Willis ever wrote attained a greater popularity than those upon scriptural themes. The generation which first read them knew not even what the word realism meant; yet remembering how well they knew their Bibles, it is somewhat hard to understand now why they did not ask even for truth. The vastly popular poem of "Absalom" is a fair specimen of Willis's best scriptural verse, which Lowell designated as "inspiration and water." It will repay the reader who cares to know how Willis did such things to compare his poem with the Bible story, and to observe how his David pours forth a poetical lamentation in five stanzas over the pall and bier of Absalom, who in the simpler narrative is left beneath a heap of stones in a wood, nobody knows how far from the spot where David uttered his infinitely tragic cry, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Yet Willis in his own day would have suffered little from any application of the parallel column principle. Evidently his readers had standards of their own, which,

for better or worse, we have not preserved. A living critic has summed the matter up by saying, "He sauntered about the sacred places in a domino, which was mistaken for the prophetic mantle." The saunterer and those who mistook him are thus placed where they belong, side by side.

While Willis was establishing himself as a religious poet, he was also producing a goodly quantity of secular prose, ephemeral pictures of life, especially in its lighter aspects. Indeed, his relations with the world became less than ever those which his early training should have produced. He figured to some extent in the more fashionable society of Boston, gave great care to his dress and personal appearance, and drove a high-stepping bay horse which he named Thalaba. For frequenting the theatre and neglecting his duties in Park Street he was excommunicated from the church. George Ticknor Curtis has left a picturesque and suggestive reminiscence of the man as he was. Curtis as a boy was present at a Harvard commencement, and stood watching the arrival of the carriages that brought the governor and other dignitaries to Cambridge. "The last vehicle in the procession," he says, "and as if a part of it, contained Willis, seated alone in his gig, dressed in a green frock-coat, white waist-coat, buff-coloured nankeen trousers, all supremely fine; his broad-brimmed Leghorn hat lay on the seat by his side. With an air of supreme noncha-

lance he tossed his reins to a hostler who stood there waiting for such chances, put a quarter into the man's hand, and told him to take Thalaba to a certain livery-stable. He then passed up the broad aisle in the wake of the procession, and if he did not ascend the stage and seat himself among the dignitaries, it must have been because there was no room."

Neither Willis nor his undertakings were very successful in Boston. His magazine was a failure, and the guardian of a young lady to whom he was engaged forbade his marriage with her. At a later day he wrote of his fellow-townsmen: "They have denied me patronage, abused me, misrepresented me, refused me both character and genius, and I feel that I owe them nothing. . . . The mines of Golconda would not tempt me to return and live in Boston." Nor was this merely a short-lived feeling, for still later he wrote, in the course of a cordial letter to Longfellow, "I confess I see everything, even my friends, through my bilious spectacles in Boston. I do not enjoy anything or anybody within its abominable periphery of hills and salt marshes."

It was with little regret, therefore, that in 1831 he joined his fortunes with those of the *New York Mirror*, into which his *American Monthly* was merged at the same time. The *Mirror* had been established by Samuel Woodworth, the author of "The Old Oaken Bucket," and its chief editor at

the time of Willis's accession was George P. Morris, who wrote "Woodman, Spare that Tree." It was a weekly literary journal, and from the work of its editors it may be imagined that its aim was carefully directed to the mark of popular taste. It was soon decided that a weekly letter from Willis in Europe would ensure the certainty of this aim, and with difficulty the sum of \$500 was raised to start him on his travels. With this sum in his pocket, and the promise of ten dollars for each letter he should write, he set sail from Philadelphia, in the autumn of 1831, on a brig bound for Havre. He was not yet twenty-six years old, and all the world lay before him. He had seen much of it before his return nearly five years later.

Like most young tourists, Willis began his letter-writing on board ship. From Paris, where the American Minister paid him the useful compliment of attaching him to the legation, from Italy, from the Mediterranean and the Levant, from Switzerland and England, he continued to write his "Pencillings by the Way" until they had reached the number of one hundred and thirty-nine, and his time for returning home was near. In America, where "First Impressions of Europe," as the sub-title described his "Pencillings," were far less common than now, the letters were read with eagerness. General Morris declared that they were copied into five hundred newspapers. It has been well said

that Willis was the progenitor of the Special Correspondents of our time, and, when the letters had a personal flavour, of the modern interviewer. The qualities which gave him success in these departments of journalism were in a large measure the qualities of his prose in general, for he was always more a journalist than a man of letters, as the distinction is commonly understood. But his prose belonged to a far more florid journalism than that which is most approved to-day. He had a feminine eye for the millinery of nature and life. He declared frankly, "The *ornamental* is my vocation," and a clever old lady is quoted by Willis's admirable biographer, Professor Henry A. Beers, as having once said, "Nat Willis ought to go about in spring in sky-blue breeches with a rose-coloured bellows to blow the buds open." When he gave the freest rein to his fancy and his affectations, the result was something which to-day seems little less than silly and tiresome; but taken at his best, in descriptions and playfully imaginative sketches of life, he is still a winning writer whose vogue in his own time stands clearly explained.

The more personal details of Willis's experience in Europe have an amusing aspect which James Parton has presented in these words, well worthy of quotation: "At this day it has something of the interest of a histrionic performance, which is highly comic to one who has been behind the scenes.

meeting" actually took place, but the seconds did their part so well on the very field of conflict that bloodshed was avoided. Willis made many warm friends, however, in England, and when he sailed for home in May of 1836 he was accompanied by a young English wife, the daughter of General Stace of the British army.

By this time Willis had shown very clearly what he could do in prose and verse, and the remainder of his life was devoted, with greater and less success, to doing it. His outward circumstances had the variations which are the common lot of man. At the country place of Glenmary, at Owego, New York, where he lived for several years after his return from England, he seems, if one may judge from the very agreeable *Letters from Under a Bridge*, to have been as near to happiness as he ever came. But bereavements and losses befell him. After a second journey to England he had to give up Glenmary, and not long afterward his wife died. There was then a third visit to England, and a search on the Continent for escaped health. In 1846 his second marriage took place, to Miss Cornelia Grinnell of New Bedford. Many years before, the sculptor Greenough had carved a statue of her as a little girl in Florence, and, curiously enough, had wrought from a remnant of the same stone a bust of Willis. It was in 1846 also that the *Home Journal* was born, the last and most prosperous descendant of the

Mirror, which, under Willis and his constant friend Morris, had passed through various stages of evolution. As editor and contributor in New York, and at his second country-place, Idlewild, on the Hudson, Willis toiled faithfully for this periodical through the twenty-one years of life that remained to him. They were years from which trouble was not absent. One of the forms it took was the publication in 1854 of the story *Ruth Hall*, by Willis's sister, "Fanny Fern," who chose the method of caricature in the guise of fiction for exploiting a family quarrel due to Willis's refusal to accept certain contributions she wished to make to the *Home Journal*. Another distress was the part he had to take in the famous Edwin Forrest divorce suit. The actor seems to have sought tragedy in daily life, and, in playing the rôle of Othello, knocked Willis down in the street one day, and involved him unpleasantly in the suit against Mrs. Forrest which resulted disastrously for the jealous husband's private reputation and triumphantly for hers. When the war came, Willis, of all men, undertook to be the *Home Journal's* correspondent in Washington. "He dropped his light plummet of observation," as Professor Beers well says, "into the boiling sea of the civil war, where it was tossed about at no great depth below the surface." His health was already much enfeebled, yet the falling off of the *Journal's* Southern subscribers and the death of

I had a letter, not
long since, from your sister
Enquiring where you were,
& supposing you had
mov'd, I could not
inform her. You seem
as respectful of your
sister as I am of mine,
but private letters are
"the last ounce that breaks
the camel's back" of a
literary man.

Yours very truly

W. D. Willis

General Morris made it seem imperative that he should give all the energies of a younger, stronger man to his work. These failing days and years of men whose pen is their support, days so often clouded by the fear of want and the necessity of work of which they are really incapable, provide the saddest pages of literary biography. The spectacle of Willis, whom Lowell had truly called "the topmost bright bubble on the wave of the town," fighting at the end against the heavy odds of need and illness is one upon which it is unnecessary to dwell. His disease was found to be epilepsy, and finally took the form of paralysis and softening of the brain. The end came at Idlewild on January 20, 1867.

An essential element of dandyism in Willis and almost everything he did was probably the cause of what might be called his personal unpopularity in print. His biographer declares that it was second only to the unpopularity of Cooper among American writers; and it is the less easily understood because Willis's heart was really of the kindest and most human. Furthermore, he was not only prompt with words of praise for promising beginners, but seems to have been almost without literary jealousies. The truth must be that our countrymen were less tolerant fifty years ago than they are to-day of anything that even seemed frivolous or flippant. Willis evidently did not take himself too seriously, and if one should seek high and low for terms to

define his work, no words more suggestive of its true character could be found than those which he chose as titles for some of his own books. Besides the *Pencillings by the Way*, there are *Inklings of Adventure*, *Loiterings of Travel*, *Hurrygraphs*, and *Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil*. Indeed, he was incessantly dashing at life with a free pencil, and just because this was what he did there is little to show for it fifty years after the best of it was done. With his prose, most of his verse, even the once universally known "Love in a Cottage," has ceased to be read. In a few such poems as "Unseen Spirits" and the "Lines on Leaving Europe," the best of Willis is to be found to-day.

In one of his "Letters from Idlewild" Willis wrote these characteristic words: "With such advantages of physiognomy and manners, so winning a look and voice, how is it that Fitz-Greene Halleck has never let himself be known to audiences? . . . What a pity that so admirably formed a creature should die (as he is likely to!) without the eye and ear homage for which Nature gifted him!" Willis could no more have understood Halleck's objections to publicity than his venturing to stake his fame upon a very few poems, — a venture in which Drake, through his early death, stood by Halleck's side. The contrast between Willis and Poe, in the nature of the men and of their work, is sufficiently striking; yet Willis in many ways is separated as distinctly

from the two men whose names are always linked together in American literary annals, Fitz-Greene Halleck and Joseph Rodman Drake. Willis does not seem to have felt that it was better to live by one poem than to die with many books ; at least he did not proceed upon such a theory, and to-day there is not one thing he wrote which is even as well known as his name. On the other hand, "Marco Bozzaris" is familiar to thousands who know little or nothing about Halleck, and "The Culprit Fay" and "The American Flag" ("When Freedom from her mountain height") are eminently living specimens of our national poetry.

Halleck outlived Willis by about ten months, though born sixteen years before him, on July 8, 1790, in Guilford, Connecticut. Drake was Halleck's junior by five years, August 7, 1795, being the time of his birth, and New York City the place. Like Willis, they were both of old New England stock. To New York came Halleck in 1811. He had received all his schooling in Guilford, and because "he could n't help it," as one of his school-mates said, had written more than the usual number of boyish verses, which his biographer, General James Grant Wilson, has done him the doubtful kindness to exhume. In New York he entered a mercantile office — having served his apprenticeship of trade in the village store of Guilford — and had not long been living his new life when he made the

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acquaintance of young Drake, then a student of medicine. The story is told that one afternoon, in the spring of 1813, the two friends, not yet intimate, were sailing in New York Bay and discuss-

Stay! look not thus - wert thou but blast,
Sweet of calm my soul could learn
To person in this aching breast
The writhings of its own despair -
The flame that bears my burning brain
Should sweep for one stifled groan,
& I might take thy load of pain
And bear its weary weight alone

S. Rowen and Drake


FAC-SIMILE STANZA AND SIGNATURE FROM DRAKE'S POEM,
"ABELARD TO ELOISE."

ing the delights of a future world. "It would be heaven," said Halleck, in the exuberance of youth, "to lounge upon the rainbow and read Tom Campbell." The thought, according to the anecdote, appealed so strongly to Drake's young sympathies that their devoted intimacy began upon the spot.

About three years after this occurrence, Drake produced his masterpiece, "The Culprit Fay." Its origin was not unlike that of *Precaution* and *The Pilot*, which Cooper produced, as we have seen, to surpass respectively an English novel writer in interest and Scott in truth to sea life. Drake, in a similar spirit, refused one day to admit the contention of Cooper and Halleck that our American rivers would not lend themselves, like the Scottish streams, to poetic treatment. To prove the truth of his position, and to give the Hudson its due, he wrote "The Culprit Fay" in the space of three days in the summer of 1816. Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* is hardly more remarkable for the rapidity of its creation; and as the work of a boy of twenty-one, Drake's poem is worthy to be remembered with the best fruits of early ripened powers.

Halleck could not look with any satisfaction upon Drake's marriage, in 1816, to the daughter of a rich shipbuilder. He thought Drake "the handsomest man in New York — a face like an angel, a form like an Apollo," and "well knew that his person was the true index of his mind." Though Halleck acted as a groomsman at the wedding, he evidently feared the alliance of genius with wealth. Yet his intimacy with Drake suffered as little abatement as possible when matrimony steps between bachelor friends. From Europe, travelling with his wife, Dr. Drake, as he was then called, wrote

clever epistles in rhyme to his friend at home, and soon after his return they began to contribute to the *Post* the verses, printed over the names of Croaker, Croaker Junior, and Croaker & Co., which provided all New York with keen amusement.

These Croaker verses were undoubtedly witty and penetrating skits on the social and political life of the town, and probably give as clear an idea of the year 1819 in New York as anything to which one can turn. Yet the importance with which they were then invested seems somewhat curious now that they are quite forgotten. Halleck's biographer tells us of the anxiety of Coleman, the editor of the *Post*, to know who his mysterious correspondents were. They made up their minds one night to go to his house and reveal themselves.

"They were ushered into the parlour; the editor soon entered, the young poets expressed a desire for a few minutes' strictly private conversation with him, and the door being closed and locked, Dr. Drake said: 'I am Croaker, and this gentleman, sir, is Croaker Junior.' Coleman stared at the young men with indescribable and unaffected astonishment, at length exclaiming, 'My God! I had no idea that we had such talents in America!'"

This, by the way, seems to have been a favourite idea with editors of the time, for only two years had passed since the instinctive expression of Richard H. Dana's similar misgivings about the origin of

he did between 1817 and 1827, when his *Alnwick Castle, with other Poems*, was published anonymously, that his fame must chiefly rest. In 1819 his *Fanny* had appeared, full of brightness and local hits at persons to whom he made reparation many years later in an edition with notes. So great was the favour in which this production was held that Brevoort, the friend of Irving, declared frankly in 1820, "that he should be prouder of being the author of *Fanny* than of any poetical work ever written in America." Such a statement as this has not its least value as a reminder of the condition of the American Parnassus at the time. Halleck's volume of 1827 showed that an improvement had begun, for it contained his "Marco Bozzaris," "Burns," and most of the other poems on the strength of which Poe, in 1846, gave him the second place among American poets. This is the arrangement of Poe's list:

"Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Sprague, Longfellow, Willis, and so on, Halleck coming second in the series, but holding, in fact, a rank in the public opinion quite equal to that of Bryant." A little later he makes himself surer of his ground by saying "that Mr. Halleck, in the apparent public estimate, maintains a somewhat better position than that to which, on absolute grounds, he is entitled."

Be that as it may, the "public estimate" ranked him very high in spite of the fact that he wrote

practically nothing from 1827 until 1864, when he brought forth "Young America," a poem, or succession of lyrics, which seem to have been due equally to the war and to the enterprising Bonner of the *Ledger*. The poet's fame to-day and in the future, as in the past, will stand or fall without the aid of this evening song.

Halleck's life was about as uneventful as the visits of his Muse were infrequent. He held positions in several business offices before he became the confidential clerk of John Jacob Astor. Once he went abroad, but evidently he cared more for seeing places than persons, and the record of his travels is mainly a long and accurate list of the towns at which he stopped. His deafness, due to the discharge of a drunken militiaman's gun by his ear when he was a child, made his part in the society of New York a little less prominent than it might otherwise have been, for his wit and charm, which have been defined as Gallic, won him many friends, and in spite of his disability and shyness the demand for his company at social gatherings almost always exceeded his willingness to supply it. Lowell felt in Halleck's work the effect of the restricting circumstances of his life "In a world of back-offices, ledgers, and stoves," and in that "Fable for Critics" which possesses the quality almost unique in contemporary criticism of not passing "out of date," one finds a generous expression of

Jefferson Sumner
May 18th '38

Dear Sir
I have received your
favor of the 15th of June. You do me
the honor to ask for a specimen
of my hand writing. In that
hand writing, it may be seen
that I do not write as you
I am very grateful for your kind
letter to publish a volume of
mine. I believe me, Dear Sir

Obediently yours

Wm. Wallace Halleck

W. B. Bradley

regret "that so much of a man has been peddled away."

Halleck never married, yet if the saying of a "superior woman" may be believed, he could not have been without his attractions. This lady is reported to have declared, "If I were on my way to church to be married, yes, even if I were walking up the aisle, and Halleck were to offer himself, *I'd leave the man I had promised to marry and take him!*" To this perhaps should be joined his epigram written for a young lady who asked for his autograph:

"There wanted but this drop to fill
The wifeless poet's cup of fame.
Hurrah! there lives a lady still,
Willing to take his name."

At the same time one significant story of his deference to the opposite sex may well be repeated. In 1821 he was travelling as the only passenger in a stage-coach in the Wyoming Valley. He had lighted a capital cigar, when the coach stopped and an elderly woman got in. True to his principles, he immediately threw away the cigar, which, unhappily, was his last, when, to his horror, the woman produced a pipe and for fifteen miles puffed forth the smoke of her wretched tobacco. "I shall on my deathbed," said Halleck afterward, "undoubtedly recall with horror, as I do

at the present moment, that fearful pipe and its smoker."

The poet was a conservative to the core. It was characteristic of him, when he went to hear Thackeray lecture on George IV., to get up and leave the hall. The king who invented a shoe-buckle was still to him "the first gentleman in Europe," and of Thackeray he could only say, "I can't listen any longer to his abuse of a better man than himself." It was also like him when Mr. Astor died, and left him \$200 a year — a bequest which Mr. William B. Astor afterward increased by the gift of \$10,000 — to retire in 1849 to his native town of Guilford, and with the sister who was his lifelong friend to pass the rest of his days in quiet. Here he died on November 19, 1867. Since his niche in the pantheon of our earlier writers had been assigned to him, a troop of younger men had come upon the scene, and most of the Knickerbocker figures had lost something of their first distinction. Yet if his place was never so glittering as that of Willis, nor so vividly won as Drake's, it was all his own, as theirs belonged to them. The memory of these three, if not their written word, speaks one thing clearly to us still, that the fame best worth winning is hardly a plant which "in broad rumour lies," except in so far as posterity is concerned therewith. But who shall say that it would be better for creators or critics to

have the power of projecting themselves fifty or seventy-five years into the future? One result of such a power would surely be that much less would be written and much less said about it.

THE HISTORIANS, ESPECIALLY PRESCOTT AND PARKMAN

IT is the present fashion to speak lightly of the "Puritan conscience." Men and women apologise for the necessity of exercising it, as if it were an hereditary taint from which it is difficult or impossible to escape. Yet it is an axiom that the spirit out of which it grows has wrought many of our best achievements; and to a high degree it has dominated the most conspicuous writers of history in America. By ancestry, birth, and training, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman represented the essence of New England. They were all sons of Massachusetts and of Harvard, and at least three of them belonged entirely to that class of the community of which Mr. Howells wrote not long ago: "If one names over the men who gave Boston her supremacy in literature during the Unitarian harvest-time of the old Puritanic seed-time which was her Augustan age, one names the people who were and who had been socially first in the city ever since the self-exile of the Tories at the time of the Revolution." The historians, in their inherited points

of view, therefore, had much in common. In the precincts of the body, as of the mind, they were neighbours, for at various times of their lives they all lived in houses that faced or were within a stone's throw of Boston Common. Yet the circumstances of their lives naturally divide them into pairs, Bancroft and Motley on one side of the dividing line, Prescott and Parkman on the other.

Of all the four, George Bancroft must be called least the Bostonian, inasmuch as he belonged most to the world which lies unseen from the State House dome. In the first place, he was not born in Boston, but in Worcester, where his father, the author of a *Life of Washington* once widely read, was a Unitarian minister. But the boy came to Harvard, and graduated at seventeen in the class of 1817. From Cambridge he proceeded to Göttingen, where he won the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and to Berlin. When he returned to America, he was one of the very few amongst our countrymen at that time who knew anything at first hand about the methods and spirit of exact European scholarship, and he possessed the further distinction of having made the personal acquaintance of Goethe and Byron. After a year of service as a tutor in Greek at Harvard College, he became in 1823 one of the principals of the Round Hill School at Northampton, Massachusetts, — an experiment in "secondary instruction" which was continued for ten

Years, in spite of its having come several decades in advance of its time.

Throughout the lifetime and for several years after the death of his first wife, whose family were prominent Whigs, Bancroft, a Democrat, refrained from political activity; but when Van Buren appointed him Collector of the port of Boston in 1837, he accepted the office, and from that time forward was a prominent figure in national affairs. Under Polk he became Secretary of the Navy, and made his term of office especially memorable by establishing the Annapolis Academy. His public service was marked by other achievements, however, and gained great distinction in subsequent years by his performance of the duties of minister of the United States at London and Berlin.

It has been said by one writer about Bancroft: "A man who makes part of the history of his own time, can better write that of another;" and undoubtedly Bancroft's practical knowledge of American government, no less than his German habits of scholarship, contributed to his special qualifications for becoming the historian of our national beginnings. The early volumes of his *History of the United States* were written, to be sure, before his political life had begun; but of the ten volumes which appeared between 1834 and 1875, eight were published after his entrance into politics. His work, both in affairs and in authorship, rendered

him eminently a citizen of the world, and long before he died in 1891, New York, Washington, and Newport had each become more his home than Boston or its neighbourhood.

There are curious analogies of circumstance between the careers of Bancroft and of John Lothrop Motley. After studying at Bancroft's school at Round Hill, Motley, like his master, graduated from Harvard College at seventeen—in 1813. Like Bancroft he continued his studies at Berlin and Göttingen, where he was intimate with Bismarck. Bancroft, destined by his parents for the ministry, had made his first literary venture in a volume of poems; Motley, intended for the law, attempted fiction before giving himself to politics and history. Like Bancroft he did his most conspicuous national service as Minister of the United States, first at Vienna and then at the court of St. James; but, far less to the credit of our government than of Motley, he felt obliged to resign from the first post, and was recalled from the second. His biographer, Dr. Holmes, has described each of these "incidents"—to use the gentle term of diplomacy—in such a way as to leave little doubt that a sensitive and high-minded public servant was cruelly wronged by their means.

But if Motley did not receive his due from the administrations he represented, there was never any dearth of honour for his work as an historian.

Prescott stood aside for him to write *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*, as Irving had already yielded up his subject of the Conquest of Mexico to Prescott; and the honest admiration which each of these generous men felt for the book he had meant to write himself, was no more sincere than the admiration of all the reading world for Motley's three great historical pictures of the struggle for liberty in the Netherlands. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* was published in 1856, the *History of the United Netherlands* in 1861-68, and *The Life and Death of John of Barneveld* in 1874. Of his theme he once wrote: "I had not first made up my mind to write a history, and then cast about to take up a subject. My subject had taken me up, drawn me on, and absorbed me into itself." Motley's friends knew with what indefatigable labour in the libraries and state archives of Europe he had prepared himself for his task; they were sure, too, of the rare personal qualities which must enter into any work of his hand and brain, for they knew him best in his life of a studious private citizen whose gifts and personality of uncommon charm won him distinction wherever he might be. Dr. Holmes has told how he shone at the meetings of the Saturday Club in Boston, and we know that dim lights were easily obscured when Lowell and Emerson and their comrades were shining together. Of all their company none had or deserved warmer friendships, within

and without their circle, than Motley. He died in England in 1877.

To attempt to give in a brief space any adequate idea of all the four historians who have been named, would be futile. Perhaps a better purpose will be served by looking somewhat nearly at Prescott and Parkman, who in many important points, though not all, stand related to each other more closely than Bancroft and Motley.

The "books without which no gentleman's library is complete" look very much alike on the well-ordered shelves. Their backs, nearly uniform, are as those of a company of persons whose lives are regulated by one unvarying set of conventions. Yet we all know what different stories their pages tell, and if we are curious to learn the histories of their own production, we find ourselves dealing with the most human of records, as various as the inmost lives of men. There are stories of patient toil, disappointments, failures, hopes, and noble victories, and the life-blood of one man gives its colour to each separate story. What we read between the pages of Prescott and Parkman, who, like the blind historian Thierry, "made friends with darkness," is a tale of unflinching courage and successful struggle, not in spurts of a few months or years, but for a lifetime, against difficulties so disheartening that a man might own them too much for him and yet prove himself no coward. The "Puritan con-

science," or the Puritan will, has rarely been put more rigorously to the test than in the work which these two men elected to do.

Struggle was familiar to the stock from which William Hickling Prescott came. His first ancestor in this country, John Prescott, settling in the Massachusetts Lancaster which was named for his English home, did brave deeds in King Philip's War. He was a man of stalwart figure, and struck terror to the Indians by entering the fight in a suit of armour, which he is said to have worn in service under Cromwell. The historian's grandfather, Colonel William Prescott, came from his farm at Pepperell to command the American troops at Bunker Hill. The grandfather of Prescott's wife, Captain John Linzee, commanded the British sloop-of-war *Falcon* as she took her part in the action of the same day; and any reader who recalls the opening words of *The Virginians* knows what became of the swords the colonel and the captain wore in the memorable fight. Prescott was well pleased, as he said in a letter to an English friend, by Thackeray's "very nice tribute to my old swords of Bunker Hill renown, and to their unworthy proprietor. It was very prettily done of him." When Prescott died the crossed swords were transferred from his library wall to a similar place in the rooms of the Massachusetts Historical Society. The victories won by Prescott's father, Judge William

Prescott, were those of peace. Daniel Webster declared that he stood at the very head of the Massachusetts Bar.

The boy who was to become the historian was the second of seven children, and was born in Salem on May 4, 1796. When he was twelve years old his father and his family came to live in Boston. Here the boy was sent to the school of the Rev. Dr. Gardiner, who, having himself been taught as a boy in England by the celebrated Dr. Parr, linked close together the learning of the Old World and the New. The stories of youthful precocity are not so abundantly told of Prescott as of many other men distinguished in later life. He learned readily, and came to care for books like any boy of quick mind in a family which did not give the first place to material things. When he entered Harvard College as a sophomore in 1811, it was not hard for him to stand well in scholarship, and to stand first seems never to have been his controlling wish. The pleasures of the place appealed to him quite as strongly as its duties, yet it is here that he is first found regulating his conduct by what he afterward called "the last infirmity of feeble minds" — good resolutions. "I shall never be too old to *make* them," he said again in later life: "See if I shall ever be old enough to *keep* them." In his own way he always tried hard to fulfil the better purposes for which they stood, and imposed upon him-

self all manner of fines and forfeits to be paid for failures. What his own way sometimes was, especially in earlier years, may be inferred from an anecdote of his travels abroad. An oculist in Paris had advised him to simplify his diet by never taking more than two glasses of wine a day. As he went from place to place, therefore, "one of the first things Prescott did was to require the waiter to show him specimens of all the wine-glasses the house afforded. He would then pick out from among them the largest; and this, though it might contain two or three times the quantity of a common wine-glass, he would have set by his plate as his measure at dinner to observe the rule in." In contrast with the superhuman strictness which ruled his later years, this record of boyish ingenuity is good to read. The work of a moment in his college days, however, brought about such dire results that the early acquisition of method as the law of his life stood him perhaps in better stead than any other portion of his training.

When the college officers had left the students in the Commons Hall one day after dinner, there was a frolic of a sort not unknown to later generations. Prescott had had no part in it, and was leaving the table, when something caused him to look back. At the instant of his turning, his open eye, the left, was violently struck by a large piece of hard bread thrown without special aim in his direction. With

the blind hero of the blind poet he might well have said,

“ Why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th’ eye confin’d,
So obvious and so easy to be quencht ? ”

He fell senseless to the ground, was carried to his father’s house in Boston, where he became alarmingly ill, and soon it was found that his left eye, though never bearing any outward mark of the blow, had entirely lost its vision. After a few weeks he was able to return to college and, with greater caution, to pursue his studies, which he did with credit until his graduation in 1814. His family celebrated the day, and his reading of a Latin poem, “*Ad Spem*,” a goddess he had good need to invoke, by entertaining five hundred of their friends at dinner under a tent in Cambridge. Whether the undergraduate who threw the bread was one of the guests history does not relate; but it is recorded that, thinking himself unknown, he never expressed compunction for what he had done or sympathy with Prescott, who in reality did know him, and in later years, when the results of the accident had been long established, spoke the timely word which secured the offender a comfortable post for life.

Nature could not have bestowed a more serviceable gift upon Prescott than that which enabled a friend to say of him: “ He could be happy in more

ways, and more happy in every one of them than any other person I have ever known." Very soon his resources of good cheer and courage were taxed to the uttermost, for the uninjured eye began to show that sympathy which an eye often expresses toward its injured mate to the utter disregard of the sympathy due to the owner of both of them. His right eye became inflamed and so painful as to affect most seriously the health of his entire body. Indeed, the defects of his vision seemed then and later to be but a part of a general rheumatism. Of the time when he was thus first confined in a dark room his mother afterward said: "I never in a single instance groped my way across the apartment, to take my place at his side, that he did not salute me with some expression of good cheer — not a single instance — as if we were the patients and his place were to comfort us."

His mother's father, Thomas Hickling, was the Consul of the United States at St. Michael's Island in the Azores, and thither the young man was sent in the hope that the sea voyage and the different life would mend his health. But he had not been there long when the dark room again became his habitation. Within its walls he sang aloud and exercised, walking hundreds of miles, he said, and his cousins, admitting a little light on the page of a book, read to him by the hour. But neither the life at St. Michael's nor the advice of the specialists

he consulted in London and Paris, when he was able to continue his journeys, gave him any material help. Nothing which he brought home with him in 1817 was of such value as his "noctograph," a contrivance made by one of the famous Wedgwood family for writing without using the eyes. It had the appearance of a portfolio, about nine by ten inches in size. When unfolded it was seen to be crossed by sixteen parallel brass wires. Underneath them was a sheet of carbonated paper, over the white paper which was to receive the writing. An ivory stylus, kept within bounds by the wires and an outside frame, made the impression through the one sheet upon the other. With the aid of this device all of Prescott's writing was done.

He did not proceed at once upon his return from Europe to make himself an historian, but first abandoned his hopes of studying law, and then married. Fortunately his father's means were sufficient to relieve him of the need of earning a living. A mercantile career, which his eyesight would have permitted, had no attractions for him, and strange as it may seem that a life of literary labour was possible when a "learned profession" was not, he deliberately made up his mind to undertake the profession of letters. He believed it to be possible to make his ears do the work of his eyes, and counting all the costs and difficulties, set about an elaborate preparation for his chosen work. He

began at the bottom by studying Lindley Murray's grammar, and listening with critical care while the masters of English style, from Roger Ascham down to his own contemporaries, were read aloud to him. Then he attacked French and Italian. German appears to have been too much for him, and Spanish was taken in its stead. He was not like the person to whom Carlyle objected as trying to persuade himself and others "that he knows about things when he does not know more than the outside skin of them." The list of the books he read, and the uses to which he put his reading in scholarly contributions on various subjects to the "Old North," as the *North American Review* was nicknamed, would shame many a man with no more than the ordinary difficulties to contend against. The beginning of his Spanish studies was due to his cherished friend, ultimately his biographer, George Ticknor, who in the autumn of 1824 read him the lectures on Spanish literature which he had prepared for the Senior Class of Harvard College. Soon afterward Prescott was casting about for the subject of a history to which he should devote his serious efforts, and one of the personal Memoranda, which he continued to make through his life, is found to read, "I subscribe myself to the History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, January 19th, 1826." A letter which he wrote immediately to Alexander H. Everett, our Minister at Madrid,

concerning his project, brought a new injury to his eye, and when the books which Mr. Everett was to send him from Spain arrived they found him utterly disabled. "With my transatlantic treasures lying around me," he wrote at a later day, "I was like one pining from hunger in the midst of abundance."

How was it possible, one asks, for a man in his condition to do anything? The beginnings were indeed discouraging. His first reader knew nothing of Spanish. "I cannot even now recall to my mind without a smile," wrote Prescott near his death, "the tedious hours in which, seated under some old trees in my country residence, we pursued our slow and melancholy way over pages which afforded no glimmering of light to him, and from which the light came dimly struggling to me through a half-intelligible vocabulary." A second reader who knew the language was better, but best of all were Prescott's own strength and courage. As he listened he jotted notes upon his noctograph; afterward these were copied out and read to him, and as he exercised afoot or on horseback his vigorous mind brought form out of chaos. His composition was all done, the corrections were made before he began to dictate his successive chapters to his amanuensis. It is said that he could carry sixty pages of his printed work accurately in mind before committing it in this way to paper. The wonder is

not that it took him ten years to complete his first work, but that he could do it at all. When *Ferdinand and Isabella*, bearing the imprint of 1838, was published, nearly two years after its completion, the author of it was immediately accorded a place in the front rank of historians. Even the *Quarterly Review* was good enough to call the book "by much the first historical work which British America has as yet produced."

The methodical habits of Prescott's early days constantly played an important part in his labours and his pleasures. His hours were so scrupulously laid out, that when the appointed minute came for putting down a novel that was read aloud to the family circle, Prescott was inexorable, no matter where or how the hero and heroine were to be left. If ten o'clock was his bedtime, he was capable, when the hour struck, of leaving a company of bachelor friends whom he was entertaining at dinner, telling them to call for whatever they desired, "and if you don't go home till morning, I wish you a merry night of it." In the morning when he was waked, he gave himself time to count twenty, and if he failed to jump out of bed when he had done so, he paid a fine of his own exaction to the servant who had called him. His tailor marked his clothes with the number of ounces each garment weighed, and being told exactly where the thermometer stood, he dressed himself accordingly. Every morning for a long

period, even in the coldest weather, he rode on his horse from Boston to watch the sunrise from a particular spot in Jamaica Plain. In his library the blue window shades were so arranged that the light could be kept at a uniform dimness, even as successive clouds crossed the sun. He "reckoned time," he said, "by eyesight, as distances on railroads are reckoned by hours."

The catalogue of his rigours with himself might be lengthened to such an extent as to make him seem quite without the charm that springs from impulse, but justice forbids one to leave unmentioned the gentler graces of his life—the tender devotion to his parents, wife, and children, the social gift which made the acquaintance think himself a friend, and the friend know himself to be fortunate beyond most men in the friendship with such a man. In his father's house and his own in Boston, and the summer places at Pepperell, Nahant, and Lynn, all these graces stood forth against a background of dignity and beauty. How he struck a contemporary is delightfully shown in a passage from a letter of Longfellow's in 1838 to his friend Greene in Rome: "This morning as I was sitting at breakfast, a gentleman on horseback sent up word that I should come down to him. It was Prescott, author of *Ferdinand and Isabella*. He is an early riser and rides about the country. There on his horse sat the great author. He is one of the best fellows in

the world, and very much my friend; handsome, gay, and forty; a great diner-out; gentle, companionable, and modest; quite astonished to find himself so famous."

Prescott's greatest popular success was won by the *Conquest of Mexico*, to which the five years of his life after 1838 were devoted. On the appearance of *Ferdinand and Isabella* Sydney Smith had said, "When Prescott comes to England, a Caspian Sea of soup awaits him." But it was not until 1850, three years after the *Conquest of Peru* had won him his third laurels, that he made the visit which was little less than a triumphal progress through the most interesting houses of England. He had friends before going, none closer than the head of the family in whose veins ran "all the blood of all the Howards," and he made many others in his few months abroad. A writer in *Fraser's Magazine* after Prescott's death declared that "the social charm of Mr. Prescott, indescribable in words, but certain in its effect, was a subject for general remark in all circles, among bishops sipping their tea at the Athenæum, and among young beauties rejoicing in their first Queen's ball." Whenever he gave up his literary labours for a season, his eyesight gained in strength. Indeed, the doctors had told him that by abandoning his studies he would surely improve his health in every way; but in 1848, after relinquishing even the slight occasional use he had been

able to make of his eye for reading, he had written in his Memoranda, "At fifty-two a man must be even more crippled than I am to be entitled to an honourable discharge from service." Accordingly he kept his harness on until the last. The third volume of *Philip the Second* appeared only the year before his death, which occurred in 1859. A warning stroke of apoplexy had come in the winter of 1858. On January 28, 1859, the second and fatal stroke befell him, and he died within a few hours.

It must be frankly admitted that, as a name to conjure with, Prescott's has lost much of its potency. With Bancroft in a greater, and Motley probably in a lesser degree, is he not now counted amongst the writers about whose work, since it is supposed to be read by everybody, it is safer not to ask too many searching questions? Parkman's popularity, on the other hand, is waxing rather than waning. His themes may have something to do with it, his nearness in method and spirit to our own time something more. As between Prescott and Parkman, the living American historian to whom the first place is most generally accorded to-day has no hesitation in saying that the reality in Parkman's work makes the difference in his favour. "In reading Prescott's account of the conquest of Mexico," says Mr. Fiske, "one feels one's self in the world of Arabian nights; indeed,

the author himself, in occasional comments, lets us see that he is unable to get rid of just such a feeling." Modern research has shown that many of the statements made by Prescott on what he accepted as good authority were merely such tales as one should expect from the land of Don Quixote. Parkman, as Mr. Fiske has suggestively pointed out, had the unspeakable advantage of dealing with a life upon which it was possible for him to look with his own eyes before he was deprived of their use.

Whatever contrasts exist between the work of Prescott and Parkman, they might each have said with Sir Walter Scott, "Author as I am, I wish these good people would recollect that I began with being a gentleman, and don't mean to give up the character." In fact, they began with being quite the same kind of gentleman, for while Prescott's ancestors were largely concerned with the civil and military affairs of Massachusetts, Parkman's were identified with the class which held perhaps even a stronger control—the Brahminical caste of clergymen. On his mother's side he was descended from John Cotton. His grandfather, Samuel Parkman, in whose house the historian was born on September 16, 1823, was counted the richest merchant in Boston, and the boy's father, the Rev. Francis Parkman, was a Unitarian minister of no little eminence. Two

long-established "Parkman Professorships" in Harvard University, one of which was held for thirty-five years by Dr. Holmes, still stand for the interest of the family in the sciences of medicine and theology. Into surroundings the most propitious, therefore, Parkman, like Prescott, was born.

The authorised Life of Parkman is yet unpublished. Whatever new details it may communicate, it can add little or nothing to our realisation of Parkman's personal courage. This is not to be gained so adequately from the many sketches of his career that were written when he died in 1893, as from an autobiographical paper which was subsequently given to the world. Mr. Parkman wrote it in 1868, when, to be sure, he still had a little more than a third of his life to live; and as he was starting for Europe he handed it to a friend with the request that it should not be opened until after his death. When the Massachusetts Historical Society met to commemorate this event, his friend, the Rev. Dr. George E. Ellis, broke the seal of the parcel he had kept unopened for twenty-five years, and read the record which Parkman had written as dispassionately as a scientist describing a strange case of bodily and mental illness. From this record the present impressions are largely drawn.

Parkman's boyhood was not altogether a period of open-air activity. There were four early years

spent on his grandfather's farm adjoining the wild Middlesex Fells, when the frail little fellow learned more from the woods about him than at the "school of high, but undeserved reputation" to which he was sent. At twelve he returned to Boston, and here for four years he devoted himself to chemical experiments as ardently as he had collected birds' eggs and trapped woodchucks in the country. His new hobby, he says, "served little other purpose than injuring him by confinement, poisoning him with noxious gases, and occasionally scorching him with some ill-starred experiment." But at about the time of entering Harvard College with the Class of 1844, his passion fixed itself permanently upon the life of the woods. His nature was such that he could never do anything by halves. The "nothing-too-much" principle of Prescott's life was totally foreign to him. His college vacations were passed in adventurous expeditions through the districts of New Hampshire and Maine, then almost unexplored. As early as in his sophomore year he resolved to write a history of the "Old French War" which ended in the English conquest of Canada. Here, he thought, the most stirring scenes of forest drama had been enacted. A brother of his grandfather, be it said, had served in this war as a private in a Massachusetts regiment. But the historian was doomed early to interruptions

in his plans. An accident in the college gymnasium sent him to Europe in search of stronger health. Happening to be in Rome in Holy Week, he took his lodging in a monastery of Passionist Fathers, that he might better understand the monastic methods of the church which ministered to the Canadian Indians. Everything was bent to one purpose. He returned home in time to graduate with his class, and afterward yielded for two years to his family's wish that he should study law. But his reading then, as in college, even to the neglect of other books, was directed to the theme upon which his heart was set. In 1846 he took the step, in pursuance of his inflexible purpose, which cost him almost fatally dear.

As he had learned much of woodcraft and a little of priestcraft, so he believed it necessary that he should know the Indian for himself, — and not from Schoolcraft. Accordingly he set out for what was then indeed the wild West with his kinsman, Mr. Quincy A. Shaw. "A highly irritable organism," he says of all this period of his life, "spurred the writer to excess in a course which, with one of different temperament, would have produced a free and hardy development of such faculties and forces as he possessed." It would be a misuse of words to employ any others than those with which Parkman himself summed up the most crucial portions of his Western experience: —

“ A complication of severe disorders here seized him, and at one time narrowly missed bringing both him and his schemes to an abrupt termination, but yielding to a system of starvation, at length assumed an intermittent and much less threatening form. A concurrence of circumstances left him but one means of accomplishing his purpose. This was to follow a large band of Ogillallah Indians, known to have crossed the Black Hill range a short time before. Reeling in the saddle with weakness and pain, he set forth, attended by a Canadian hunter. With much difficulty the trail was found, the Black Hills crossed, the reluctance of his follower overcome, and the Indians discovered on the fifth day encamped near the Medicine Bow range of the Rocky Mountains. On a journey of a hundred miles, over a country in parts of the roughest, he had gained rather than lost strength, while his horse was knocked up and his companion disconsolate with a painful cough. Joining the Indians, he followed their wanderings for several weeks. To have worn the airs of an invalid would certainly have been an indiscretion, since in that case a horse, a rifle, a pair of pistols, and a red shirt might have offered temptations too strong for aboriginal virtue. Yet to hunt the buffalo over a broken country when, without the tonic of the chase, he could scarcely sit upright in the saddle, was not strictly necessary for maintaining the requisite prestige.

The sport, however, was good, and the faith undoubting that, to tame the devil, it is best to take him by the horns."

Beside the personal knowledge of the Indian gained by these heroic means, Parkman brought back with him from the West a shattered constitution. But as he dealt with his difficulties among the Indians, so he dealt with their results throughout his life. It was his purpose to tell the world the things he knew and meant to learn, and "reeling in the saddle with weakness and pain," he proceeded to do it. In 1849 *The Oregon Trail*, written originally as a series of papers for the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, appeared as a book. In 1848, when his disorders seemed at their worst, the light of day being unsupportable to his eyes, and his brain driven to a "wild whirl" by any continued mental effort, he resolved to begin work upon the *History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac*. The physicians practically told him that it was madness, and he, rightly believing that his salvation lay in effort, gave them no heed. When he began his work he could not listen for more than half an hour at a time, to the reading of the material he had long been collecting, and there were many days when nothing could be done. He made his notes with closed eyes upon an apparatus like Prescott's noctograph, except that it had no carbonated paper, and the writing was done directly upon the white

sheet with a pencil. When the scrawls were deciphered and read to him, he mastered their import and dictated his narrative. There were the same perplexities that Prescott had to encounter with foreign documents. "The language was chiefly French," said Parkman, "and the reader was a girl from the public schools, ignorant of any tongue but her own. The effect, though highly amusing to bystanders, was far from being so to the person endeavouring to follow the meaning of this strange jargon." Yet in spite of everything his condition did improve, and in 1851 the book was published. Such was his view of the obstacles he always had to overcome that he believed the results of his work to be better rather than worse because of them.

In 1851, also, there was a new disaster in an effusion of water on the left knee, which plunged him into miseries of body and mind as intense as any he had ever known. But he was already at work upon his greater enterprise, the series of histories which now, in seven volumes, bear the general title of *France and England in North America*. It was fourteen years before the first of these was finished. In 1865 appeared *The Pioneers of France in the New World*. There had been many interruptions, one of four years, and others of lesser duration, from a single year to single months, weeks, and days. Meanwhile he had married and lost his wife, had journeyed often to Europe and to the scenes of his

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Chapter XV
1679

Hardship of La Salle

The winter journey, - the deserted Town, - St. Louis
Cook, - Lake Michigan; - The Wilderness; - New France, -
La Salle's men gone out, - the general ill success; - the
and sharp chastisement of the Mulattos

The winter had been a ^{very} hard one. When
La Salle & his ^{five} companions reached Lake
Peoria Lake, they found it choked with ice
from shore to shore with ice thick that
stopped the progress of their canoes but
was too thin to bear the weight of a
man. They dragged their ^{light raft} ~~canoes~~ up the
bank and into the forest, where the city
of Peoria now stands; made two rude sledges,
placed the canoes & baggage upon them,
and, tiring knee-deep ⁱⁿ through the saturated
snow, dragged them from leagues through
the woods, till they reached a point where
the ^{main} ~~movement~~ of the current kept the
water partially free from ice. They were

REDUCED FAC-SIMILE PAGE OF MANUSCRIPT OF PARKMAN'S "LA
SALLE AND THE DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT WEST," THE
ONLY BOOK ENTIRELY IN HIS HANDWRITING.

narratives, and had begun to collect a vast number of original documents now preserved in the rooms of the Massachusetts Historical Society. His eyes were at times stronger, so that he could use them, reading a minute and resting a minute for periods of half an hour, repeated several times in the course of a day. Then, again, he could write for a season with his own hand and vision. In 1854 he had begun to spend his summers at a country place in Jamaica Plain. Here, unable to use his eyes, he took to the beneficent work of horticulture, and did it so well that the *lilium Parkmanni*, the result of his experiments in hybridisation, perpetuates his name as the creator of a new flower. At various times he was President of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, a professor in the agricultural department of Harvard University, a member of the highest governing boards of his alma mater, and President of the St. Botolph Club in Boston. But much as he loved the intercourse with his fellowmen, he had to limit his indulgence in it. The work of his life was the completion of his historical series, and this, in spite of all the obstacles that would have seemed insurmountable to a weaker spirit, he achieved in the year before his death, on November 8, 1893. A writer who lived only to begin his work, Robert Beverly Hale, has left these lines, which help us well to remember both what he began and what Parkman finished :

“With youth’s blue sky and streaming sunlight blest,
And flushed with hope, he set himself to trace
The fading footprints of a banished race,
Unmindful of the storm-clouds in the west.
In silent pain and torments unconfessed,
Determination written on his face,
He struggled on, nor faltered in his pace
Until his work was done and he could rest.

“He was no frightened paleface stumbling through
An unknown forest, wandering round and round.
Like his own Indians, with instinct fine
He knew his trail, though none saw how he knew,
Reckoned his time, and reached his camping-ground
Just as the first white stars began to shine.”

In that Prescott was blessed with a body less compact of weakness than Parkman’s, and with a spirit far more readily schooled to discipline, the record of his achievements may be read in later years with something less of that triumph which every man feels in the victory of another. But no historian has told a tale capable of stirring the blood more quickly than the histories to be read between the pages of these two “friends with darkness.”

SOME HUMOURISTS

THERE are few writings concerned with wit and humour which do not begin with elaborate definitions of these almost indefinable qualities. The present writing will increase the number of exceptions to this rule by one. If there be readers who cannot satisfy themselves with their own definitions, they need not look far to find the whole matter — even to the recognition of that third quality, a *sense of humour* — set forth in a score of different ways. Lowell's opinion on the subject should certainly be worth more than most men's, and he once wrote, "My idea of the distinction between wit and humour is that wit makes others laugh, and humour ourselves cry sometimes." The lecturer to a college class who quoted the definition of humour as "wit plus sympathy" provided at least one of his hearers, some years ago, with a practical working distinction for every-day use. But there are many others, often subtler, to be picked up in places where more potent appeals to the memory are made than in college class-rooms. Whether we consciously divide the things that amuse us into

the witty and the humourous sallies of mankind, we are grateful for the provocations to mirth, and entertain toward the man who gives us laughter a feeling which separates him from the common throng.

The attempts to formulate the distinctions between American humour and that of other lands are almost as frequent as the definitions of humour itself. Again it seems unnecessary here to add one to these attempts. We all know reasonably well how composite and yet how definite are the qualities which render most Americans recognisable wherever they may be found ; and like them, to a degree equally exclusive of doubt, is the quality of humour which the world knows as American. Mr. T. W. Higginson has said " that the whole department of American humour was created, so to speak, by the amazed curiosity of Englishmen." It would be unfair to take this statement entirely apart from its context, and adorn a tale of confusion between cause and effect by means of it. Yet whatever one may think of it, or of the taste and spirit of much American humour, it would be foolish to forget that, in the department of letters to which it belongs, our fellow-countrymen have done that which gives them their clearest title to a place of their own as writers.

Much of the best achievement in this direction has obviously been wrought by men whose fame is secured by other gifts than those of mere humour.

It is necessary only to recall such names as Franklin, Irving, Lowell, Holmes, Warner, Curtis, Mitchell, and Bret Harte, and we remember how much besides being humourists some of our best humourists have been and are. It is noteworthy also that the names of women occupy a scanty place in the annals of our humour. In other fields they may be counted now by hundreds, but excepting some short stories here and there, and the work of a few women like "Josiah Allen's Wife" and the "Widow Bedott," our humorous writing has been done almost entirely by men. To be sure, there is an American volume, *The Wit of Women*, compiled by one of their sisters, who with a feminine argument of her own brings it to an end with these lines:

"If you pronounce this book not funny
And wish you had n't spent your money,
There soon will be a general rumour
That you 're no judge of Wit and Humour."

But even this *argumentum ad hominem* fails to convince. Mark Twain, happily still the living exponent of American humour in its essence, addressed the readers of his *Library of Humour*, published more than ten years ago, in a different fashion. Nothing could have been more characteristic of him and of the variety of humour which he represents than his "Compiler's Apology," printed in facsimile from his handwriting: "Those selections

in this book which are from my own works were made by my two assistant-compilers, not by me. This is why there are not more."

But living writers are not the present theme, nor those whose names derive a lustre from more serious work. Still less is it intended to attempt a discussion of the broad theme of American humour in its ethnic and philosophic bearing. Perhaps the reader will not unwillingly join in the preference to look at a few of the typical creators and creations of our native humour. Two facts he will recognise at once: First, that the newspapers have been an important medium of humorous expression — in part because our humourists have dealt frequently with public affairs, and in part because the newspapers have mirrored nearly everything, good and bad, that is representative of American life; and, second, that an amusing, fictitious personality, something more than a mere name, has frequently been created as the mouthpiece of a humorous writer. When Lowell began writing his most effective political satires, he sent them to the editors of the *Boston Courier* and the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, and a flesh-and-blood Hosea Biglow loomed large behind his utterances. Herein Lowell, with his own skill and power, was merely elaborating, in the forties, a device which in the thirties had made the name of Major Jack Downing a household word. In the same decade, but a few years after the appearance

of Major Downing, the first lines in the typical Yankee figure of Sam Slick had been drawn by the



Major Jack Downing

Frontispiece from "The Life and Writings of Major Jack Downing." Boston, 1833.

Canadian pen of Judge Haliburton; but the down-east Major was the first conspicuous figure in this field of New-World letters, and as the proto-

type of later creations deserves more than a passing glance.

One is confused at first by finding the origin of the collected Downing letters attributed to two persons, Seba Smith, a Maine journalist, and Charles Augustus Davis (1795-1867), a New York shipping merchant. The truth appears to be that Smith created the Downingville major, and Davis adopted him as his own offspring. In neither of the volumes in which the letters of Major Jack Downing were first collected does the name of their real author appear, but the evidence from various sources goes to show that the Boston volume of 1833, made up of letters to the *Portland Courier*, was wholly the work of Smith, and the New York volume of 1834, made up of letters to the *New York Daily Advertiser*, wholly that of Davis. Before the first collection was printed, some of the New York letters had appeared, for an appendix to the Boston volume, declaring that "the *real* Major has never sent any letter to any other paper than the *Portland Courier*," proceeds to print "some of Major Jack Downing's letters, that he never wrote," and these are identical with letters addressed to the *New York Daily Advertiser*, and collected in the volume attributed to Davis. Any possible doubt that Seba Smith was the author of the first volume is removed by the book *My Thirty Years Out of the Senate* (New York, 1859),

appearing over his own name, and republishing the letters contained in the Boston volume of 1833. It is not unnatural to resent in some measure the credit which Davis won for himself, abroad and among his friends, — of whom Irving was one and Halleck another, — by the cleverness of his letters, and their superiority, according to some opinions, to those of Smith; for in spite of it all he was clearly a trespasser on another man's ground. If he had confined himself to newspapers he would have been merely one of many imitators. Even the father of Motley, the historian, as Dr. Holmes tells us, was "the author of one or more of the well-remembered 'Jack Downing' letters."

The ethics and bibliography of the letters, however, are less important than the Major and the letters themselves. In his volume of 1859 Seba Smith tells how they first came to be written. From other sources we learn that Smith was born in Buckfield, Maine, on September 14, 1792, was graduated from Bowdoin College in 1818, and in 1820 became the editor of the *Eastern Argus* in Portland. From 1830 until 1837 he conducted the *Portland Courier*, and it was in 1830, according to his own story, that he began writing for its columns the Downing letters. The Maine Legislature, evenly balanced in politics, afforded a good target for ridicule, and it seemed possible by the exercise of it to profit the young and struggling *Courier*.

Accordingly Seba Smith "bethought himself of the plan to bring a green, unsophisticated lad from the country into town with a load of axe-handles, hoop-poles, and other notions for sale, and while waiting the movement of a dull market, let him blunder into the halls of the legislature, and after witnessing for some days their strange doings, sit down and write an account of them to his friends at home in his own plain language." From the beginning the letters were a success, not only with Maine readers, but in Boston and other places where the newspapers copied them freely. With their progress the Yankee correspondent advanced in importance. From his native town of Downingville, "three miles from the main road as you go back into the country, and . . . *jest about in the middle of down East,*" he proceeded to Washington, where he soon became an intimate friend and confidential adviser of President Jackson. He represents himself even as "the General's" bedfellow, and none of "Old Hickory's" actions is too important or too trivial for Major Downing to have a hand in it. The possibilities of giving the ways of the Administration a ridiculous aspect by this method need merely to be suggested. From Seba Smith's book it is worth while to transcribe some words about the memorable visit to Cambridge when the degree of LL.D. was conferred upon Jackson, for they represent with sufficient clearness

the vein of humour that was characteristic both of the original Jack Downing, who is reported to have known himself only by the scar on his left arm, and of his principal rival.

“Ye see when we were at Boston they sent word to us to come out to Cambridge, for they wanted to make the President a doctor of laws. What upon airth a doctor of laws was, or why they wanted to make the President one, I could n’t think. So when we come to go up to bed I asked the Ginerall about it. And says I, ‘Ginerall, what is it they want to do to you out to Cambridge?’ Says he, ‘They want to make a doctor of laws of me.’ ‘Well,’ says I, ‘but what good will that do?’ ‘Why,’ says he, ‘you know, Major Downing, there’s a pesky many of them are laws passed by Congress that are rickety things. Some of ’em have very poor constitutions, and some of ’em have n’t no constitution at all. So that it is necessary to have somebody there to doctor ’em up a little, and not let ’em go out into the world, where they would stand a chance to catch cold and be sick, without they had good constitutions to bear it. You know,’ says he, ‘I’ve had to doctor the laws considerable ever since I’ve been at Washington, although I was n’t a regular bred doctor. And I made out so well about it, that these Cambridge folks think I better be made into a regular doctor at once, and then there’ll be no grumbling and disput-

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1000

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According to a reported declaration of Artemus Ward, Major Jack Downing was his pattern. It is not difficult of belief, for in the use to which they put the Yankee vernacular, in their assumed familiarity with conspicuous persons, and in the "free-born-American-citizen" attitude of each writer there is much that suggests a family relationship. Artemus Ward — as the man whose real name was Charles Farrar Browne is more familiarly called — may be regarded as typical of the entire class of humorous journalists and speakers who have followed him. Certainly he has not been denied the homage of imitation, and certainly the writings he has left behind him are enough more than mere "comic copy" to give him his place as a representative figure. Lowell told the truth about one of the humorous methods in which Artemus Ward excelled when he said: "There is no fun in bad spelling of itself, but only where the misspelling suggests something else that is droll *per se*." It is the merit of Artemus Ward's verbal vagaries — for example, when a friend sends him a copy of "Chawcer's poems," and he says, "Mr. C. had talent, but he could n't spel" — that the droll personality of Charles Farrar Browne's creation is always realised more clearly by reason of what may be called his mental dialect.

If Artemus Ward's descent as a humourist is to be traced from Major Jack Downing, it is thus that

he accounts ~~from~~^{for} the Browns, as the family name was written before he himself adopted the final ϵ : "I should think we came from Jerusalem, for my father's name was Levi, and we had a Nathan and a Moses in the family. But my poor brother's name was Cyrus, so perhaps that makes us Persians." As a matter of fact, the Browns came to Maine from Massachusetts in 1783, and on April 26, 1834, the humourist was born in the village of Waterford. He was one of four children, and, unlike many men who have made a mark in the world, could not have regarded his mother as the source of his peculiar distinction. She is described as the fondest of parents, but a person entirely lacking in humour and the sense of it. It is related that when she first heard her son lecture in Boston, she was startled and irritated exceedingly by hearing him vouch for one of his statements by the use of a real name and a real formula which had frequently fallen from her own lips, and was introduced into the lecture entirely for her benefit: "I know it's true, for my Uncle Ransford Bates said so." The youthful antics ascribed to her son must have been equally trying to the good woman, and yet the devotion which he cherished for her through life helps one to realise what it must have meant to her to let the boy, only thirteen years old when his father died, go out into the world almost immediately to make his living in printing-offices. He

was but fifteen when, after four experiments under country editors in New Hampshire and Maine, he found himself in the Boston printing house from which B. P. Shillaber's (Mrs. Partington's) comic paper, *The Carpet Bag*, was issued. Setting up the type of Mrs. Partington's paragraphs and of J. G. Saxe's witty verses, he ventured to write jokes himself, and had the felicity of seeing them printed.

A roving disposition carried him, soon after this humble beginning of a journalistic career, to Tiffin, Ohio. This was in 1856, and before 1860 he had won his spurs in Toledo and Cleveland, where the editor of the *Plaindealer*, hearing the fame of his wit, secured him as local editor at the salary of twelve, afterward advanced to fifteen dollars a week. At this post he remained three years. His Cleveland associates have since recalled him as a youth of surpassing awkwardness and rusticity at first, but developing by degrees a regard for his personal appearance which brought him later to an ill-advised fondness for diamonds and curled hair. But there is ample evidence in this period also of his more essential graces and virtues. Generous, companionable, and trusting, laughing over his work, serious and vital, sometimes to the degree of mental suffering, given to ways eccentric and unconventional, he seems to have fallen in with the mode of journalistic life which needs but does not always receive the help of native qualities like Browne's to make it

alluring. There are innumerable stories of his practical jokes, but one will suffice to indicate their audacity. One night with a fellow wag in journalism known as "the Fat Contributor," he went to the hotel where a dramatic reader, who was to give his first entertainment in the place the next day, was stopping. They called him from his bed, told him they were newspaper men, and would ruin his prospects unless he should come with them as he was to the hall near by, and show what he could do as a reader. The poor man protested, but their threats were too much for his courage, and shivering with cold, he went with them to the dreary, unheated hall, and, if the story be true, entertained them for several hours with his selections. "They had always thirsted to hear a dramatic reader in night dress," they told him; and if they did not commend his more decorous performance in public, their rather heartless idea of humour must have profited the unhappy reader but little.

It was in Cleveland that Browne began signing the name of Artemus Ward to his productions. The most credible theory of the source of this *nom de plume* is that the veritable *nom de guerre* of General Artemas Ward of the Revolutionary army appealed to the humourist, who adopted it with the change of a single letter. By degrees the new Artemus Ward became a definite character, a showman who could write of his equipment :

“ My show at present consists of three moral bares, a Kangaroo (a amoozin’ little Raskal — ’t would make you larf yerself to deth to see the little cuss jump up and squeal), wax figgers of G. Washington, Gen. Tayler, John Bunyan, Capt. Kidd and Dr. Webster in the act of killin’ Dr. Parkman, besides several miscellanyus moral wax statoots of celebrated piruts & murderers, &c., ekalled by few & exceld by none.”

It was in Cleveland, too, that Browne first conceived the idea of becoming a public lecturer. But that was not to be until after he went, in 1860, to live in New York, as editor of the promising comic journal, *Vanity Fair*, and one of the Bohemian set which frequented Pfaff’s, and presented to Mr. Howells, picking up his first impressions of Eastern writers, a notable contrast to the group of men he had just left in Boston.

On a desperately stormy night, near the end of 1861, Browne first faced a New York audience as a public speaker, and suffered a loss of thirty dollars; but he had already tried his lecture, on “The Babes in the Wood,” in Norwich, Connecticut, and other towns. It was a peculiarity of Ward’s lectures that they had little or nothing to do with the subject announced. He would begin with a mention of it, then ask the audience to let him tell them a little story, which would wander on into irrelevant witticisms occupying about an hour and a half, when he

would take out his watch, appear to be overcome with shame and confusion, and bring his talk to a hurried, apologetic end. In Norwich the good people, who had laughed immoderately at his jokes, crowded around him when the lecture was finished to express sympathy for the nervousness through which, as they supposed, he had failed to say anything at all about the Babes in the Wood. He himself modestly told a different story, at the breakfast-table of James T. Fields, when he said of his first audiences: "I was prepared for a good deal of gloom, but I had no idea they would be *so much* depressed." "Artemus Ward will Speak a Piece" was the sum and substance of the advertising placard which announced his appearance in various places. Even the tickets were whimsical and characteristic. For one of his most popular lectures the card of admission read: "Artemus Ward among the Mormons. Admit the Bearer and One Wife." The programmes were not without their individuality. In London they were enriched with the note, "Mr. ARTEMUS WARD will call on the citizens of London at their residences, and explain any jokes in his narrative which they may not understand." There may have been reason enough in such an offer if John Bright was reported with even an approach to truth in saying: "I must say I can't see what people find to enjoy in this lecture. The information is meagre and is presented in

a desultory, disconnected manner. In fact, I can't help seriously questioning some of the statements."

Probably enough has been said to show that Artemus Ward stood entirely alone among the lecturers who galled one another's kibes on the lyceum platforms of his day. Of the sober entertainments which they provided Ward said: "The men go becauz its poplar and the wimin folks to see what other wimin folks have on." To his lectures they went solely to be amused, and as their success became rapidly known, he soon found that he had done well to abandon journalism. East and West his "show" was in demand. A San Francisco manager telegraphed him, "What will you take for forty nights in California?" and his immediate response, "Brandy and water," so tickled the Western humour that when he came to Virginia City the miners took charge of the entertainment, would have no tickets sold, but invited everybody, and collected sixteen hundred dollars in gold for the lecturer by passing round hats, one of which broke with the weight of its contents. Brigham Young received him cordially in Salt Lake City, in spite of the jests he had made and was still to make about the sect of men whose "religion is singular, but their wives are plural." There was little of appreciation left for him to win from his own countrymen, at least of those who "liked that sort

of thing," when in 1866 he determined to try the fortunes of his wit in London.

Mr. Higginson's phrase, "the amazed curiosity of Englishmen," well describes the state of mind which Artemus Ward excited in the mother country. There could not have been many John Brights in the audiences which thronged Egyptian Hall for the six weeks before his failing health made the seventh his last week of public appearance. The abashed manner of the lecturer, his personal peculiarities of which he himself made fun, the difficulties with his panorama, which in general was painted as badly as possible, because excellence was expensive, the eccentricities of the moon and the prairie fires, which would shoot up and flare out at the wrong moments, to the apparent consternation of the lecturer, — all these, to say nothing of the humour of his talks, are reported to have kept his hearers in a frenzy of laughter. Who can wonder that they were quite overcome by the gravity with which he would point to dark regions in his canvas and say: "These are intended for horses; I know they are, because the artist told me so. After two years he came to me one morning and said, 'Mr. Ward, I cannot conceal it from you any longer; they are horses.'" It was in the full tide of success, achieved simply by the exercise of natural gifts, that his career of unique popularity was cut short. His contributions to *Punch* had won him a place on

the staff of the paper, and all things indicated the continuance of success. But the cough which had made nearly all his lecturing in London difficult stopped it entirely. His friends took him to the island of Jersey, in the hope that its milder air might restore him. Then they tried to bring him back to London, but he could not bear the journey beyond Southampton, where he died early in 1867, not quite thirty-three years old.

It may be thought that an inordinate space has been devoted to a person who stood related to literature as *bouffe* to grand opera. Yet Artemus Ward represented conspicuously a class of writers which must not be overlooked in any general survey of American letters. Indeed, it would not be unprofitable to scrutinise the career and work of other men who stood less upon the dignity than the drollery of their productions; for if their appeal has not always been to the most fastidious, they have often meant more to "the great body of the plain people" than graver bookmen who escape the humourist's penalty of writing, as a rule, for one generation or decade. The mere names of these men, dead and living, would make a catalogue of no scanty length. "John Phœnix," "Orpheus C. Kerr" (Office Seeker), "Petroleum V. Nasby" would stand among the better known. B. P. Shillaber (1814-90), a Boston journalist,—who took his cue and his pseudonym from Sydney Smith's

reference in a political speech to a certain Mrs. Par-
tington's vain endeavour to mop up the Atlantic



Burlington, Vt.
Sept. 20. 57

W. Burtch & Co.

Dear Sir:-

I very cheer-
fully comply with your
request; and am

Yours truly
J. G. Saxe

FAC-SIMILE OF A LETTER FROM JOHN G. SAXE REPLYING TO A
REQUEST FOR AN AUTOGRAPH.

Ocean, and made a new Mrs. Malaprop of his talk-
ative old heroine, — would claim especial attention.

So, too, would Henry W. Shaw (1818-85), who after encountering every experience as a Western pioneer began writing at forty-five, and over the name of "Josh Billings" put forth many witty, homely maxims, of which, perhaps, none is more memorable than that "it iz better to kno less, than to kno so mutch that aint so."

Apart from these newspaper celebrities stands one of whom Mr. Stedman has written: "For the most part he was a popular specimen of the college-society, lecture-room, dinner-table rhymester that may be set down as a peculiarly American type and of a generation now almost passed away." John Godfrey Saxe dealt less in humour than in clear-cut wit. The mastery of words in rhymes which Richard H. Barham or Tom Hood might often have been willing to own gave him his distinction. Like many of those who have incited our countrymen most successfully to mirth, he was of New England origin and training. Born in Highgate, Vermont, on June 2, 1816, he spent his boyhood on a farm, graduated at Middlebury College in 1839, and began the practice of law. Until he was twenty-five he wrote little or nothing, and then the *Knickerbocker Magazine* printed his ballad of "The Briefless Barrister," which is not without an autobiographical value:

"Unfortunate man that I am!
I've never a client but grief;
The case is, I've no case at all,
And in brief, I've ne'er had a brief."

Yet with a mingling of law, journalism, and politics he went on with his Vermont life in St. Albans and Burlington, until, twice defeated as a candidate for governor in his native State, he moved to New York. For an impression of his personal appearance we may look again to his verses :

“ Now I am a man, you must learn,
Less famous for beauty than strength,
And for aught I could ever discern,
Of rather superfluous length.
In truth, 't is but seldom one meets
Such a Titan in human abodes,
And when I walk over the streets,
I 'm a perfect Colossus of roads.”

In spite of this account of himself, his personality was really most attractive, and, with his skill in speaking, won him great popularity as a lecturer and reader of his own verses. In 1872 he became associated with the *Albany Evening Journal*, and in Albany he died on March 31, 1887. The last portion of his life affords another story of the sorrow which seems especially to beset the sons of laughter. In 1874 he narrowly escaped death in a railroad accident in Virginia. This shock was soon followed by the death, in rapid succession, of his wife, three daughters, and a son ; and the result of his overwhelming distress was that he became the victim of attacks of melancholy, which caused his

complete retirement from the world. It was indeed a tragic ending for the life of the light-hearted singer of "The Proud Miss MacBride," "The New Rape of the Lock," and scores of other skilful rhymes and *vers de société*, which were the delight of his generation.

Of men about whom so much might be said it is difficult to say so little. But restraint must be exercised still further, even to exclude that vast anonymous expression of American humour which confronts us every day and every week in the periodical press. The composite person who produces it has no dates of birth and death to record, no incidents of struggle and success to relate; yet as unmistakably as Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and the many others, living and dead, who have been mentioned or more closely regarded, he is a product of our curious civilisation, and, so far as one can see, will continue to help us in realising, still without the need of definitions, the distinctive qualities of our national humour.

EMERSON AND CONCORD

WHEN Dr. Holmes finished his *Life of Emerson* in 1884, he wrote in a letter about it: "The truth is that Emerson's life and writings have been so *darned over* by biographers and critics that a new hand can hardly tell his own yarn from that of his predecessors, or one of theirs from another's." Three years later appeared the more complete *Memoirs of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, by James Elliot Cabot, his literary executor, and almost incessantly since then the process of darning and re-darning has been kept up. It is less with the hope, therefore, of saying new things than of refreshing the memory of the old that any attempt to consider the circumstances of Emerson's life must now be made. The teachings of his philosophy may receive new illumination from time to time. New applications of it to new problems will doubtless be possible for many years to come. The story of his living told itself, and it is enough if somebody will merely repeat it from time to time. The life carried its own interpretation, and needs no commentator to point out either the seem-

ing unattainableness of some of its standards for common flesh and blood, or the lofty value of its example as a freed life of intellect and spirit, a breath as of "winds, austere and pure," in the thick air of a workaday world.

There are two ways of using a village as a place to live in. The one is to take its freedom from the engrossing concerns of city life as an excuse for falling back upon the pettinesses of a small community: standing thus close to trivial things their size is magnified out of all proportion, and the prospect of larger things beyond is blotted out. The other way is to use one's freedom for seeing things both near and far in their true dimensions. The Massachusetts village of Concord, for a considerable part of our century, has been a place where the practice of this second method was to be found. Any village in which Emerson, Hawthorne, and Thoreau, to cite its greatest names, were living at one time must have been such a place. It is not unnatural that the villagers themselves should have magnified the importance of some of their lesser names. When the amusing writer who made it his task to describe America and the Americans from the French point of view, native or acquired, was taken to Concord, he had to confess that some of the names with which he was expected to be familiar — "that of a man named Alcott, for example" — were quite unknown to him. His point of view was as dis-

tinctly that of the outside world as Alcott's own outlook seems to have been parochial. Emerson himself told the story of having asked Alcott one day what he could show for himself, what he had really done to justify his existence. "If Pythagoras came to Concord," was the triumphant reply, "whom would he ask to see?" The sage was safe enough in his Socratic retort, but in spite of parochial illusions, any pilgrim to Concord in the days of its distinction must have recognised it as a place where the better sort of village life was eagerly lived, and must have known that men and not the village had brought him on his pilgrimage.

Of all the men of thought and letters who contributed in a greater and less degree to this distinction of the town, Thoreau was the only one who was born in Concord. Yet Emerson, by every right of inheritance, was more truly its son. The town was founded by a direct ancestor, the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, who came to America in 1634. His granddaughter married an Emerson, a minister, who died in Concord in 1680; and his grandson, William Emerson, the minister of the town at the beginning of the Revolution and the first occupant of the "Old Manse," was the grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose father was another Rev. William Emerson, minister of the First Church in Boston. Made up of ministers and graduates of Harvard College, the race was eminently of the

sort which Dr. Holmes defined as academic. Ralph Waldo, born in Boston on May 25, 1803, was the fourth of eight children. Two girls and a boy died in early childhood, and of the boys that remained, their remarkable aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, well said, "They were born to be educated."

This was no easy end for their mother to achieve in the straitened days that followed the death of the Rev. William Emerson in 1811. But the First Church and a few kind friends and kinsmen lent their aid, and the established training of good Bostonians, through the Latin School and Harvard College, was made possible. There were times when Ralph, as he was then called, and his brother Edward had to share the use of one overcoat, and jeering schoolfellows would ask, "Whose turn is it to wear the coat to-day?" The boys helped in the household duties, such as driving the cow from the house where they once lived, near the present site of the Boston Athenæum, to a pasture beyond the Common, and took far less time for play than for the improvement of their minds. At school and college Emerson made himself the name which is commonly won by studious boys of slender health and means and of talents in no wise phenomenal. He was fourteen years old when he entered Harvard College, and became "President's freshman," a kind of errand-boy for the faculty, with the privilege *ex officio* of serving as a waiter at commons, and paying

thereby for three-fourths of his own board. During his course he took prizes for dissertations and declamation, and wrote the class poem after seven youths



A CURIOUS EARLY PORTRAIT OF EMERSON.

had declined the honour ; but at the end his college rank was only a little above the middle of the class.

From college Emerson followed the path he might have been expected to take, the path of a

school-teacher. His purpose to make it the means of approach to the ministry was less definite than in many cases like his own. It seems to have been a disappointment to him that in teaching others he did not learn more himself. His scholars in various places, however, were unconscious of shortcomings. One of them has recorded the efficacy of his reproof, consisting merely of the words, "Oh, sad!" soberly spoken to a youthful offender. His own youthfulness was not overlooked by the young ladies, some of them older than himself, whom he taught in Boston. On Election Day, it is told, they used to ask him for a holiday that he might vote, and rejoiced in the blushes of their master, still a minor. To Emerson the period was one of dissatisfaction and drudgery. In his journal of 1824, a month before he came of age, he made the entry: "I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my hopes to the Church;" and before a year had passed—that is, in February of 1825—he was established in Divinity Hall at Cambridge as a student for the ministry.

The ministerial period of Emerson's life was full of struggle and perplexity. Ill health was the first obstacle he had to overcome. The weakness of his eyes interrupted his studies at once, and the weakness of his lungs made it necessary for him to spend nearly the whole winter and spring of 1827 in the South. Then there were inward questionings about

the rightfulness of his place even within the flexible boundaries of Unitarianism. Whatever the younger men of this day may be writing to aunts who have their confidence, Emerson at twenty-three was not using the language of his contemporaries when he wrote to Mary Moody Emerson: " 'T is a queer life, and the only humour proper to it seems quiet astonishment." One of the maxims of his life, early inculcated by this strenuous aunt, was, "Always do what you are afraid to do." Both in the earlier and in the later days of his ministry this rule must have been in some measure his guide. He did not do the easy thing in establishing himself successfully as a minister; and when the time came to choose between the pleasant incumbency of the Second Church in Boston and an adherence to his personal opinion in a matter of worship, it would have been the course of least resistance to retain his post and modify his views. The issue between him and his parishioners was vital; he had ceased to think the regular administration of the communion essential or even desirable; naturally his people thought otherwise. He made no attempt to impose his views upon them, but when it was clear that no common ground was tenable, he set forth in a sermon his reasons for thinking as he did, and brought to an end his connection with the parish. There was the best of good feeling on each side. In many ways he had shown eminent fitness for the

ministry. When a good choir sang, "its best was coarse and discordant after Emerson's voice." His sermons delighted even those who failed to understand them. The sincerity of his more personal relations and the inherent charm of the man made him abundantly beloved. In his strictly ministerial functions it appears that he was not always successful. The story is told that once when he was called to the death-bed of a Revolutionary soldier, and showed some difficulty in administering the usual consolations, the veteran summoned all his strength to exclaim: "Young man, if you don't know your business, you had better go home." But it was the inward voice and not rebuffs like this that brought him to the wise decision that his work in the world could not be that of a regular minister. He was, in fact, too completely a Protestant, too thoroughly imbued with the "dissidence of dissent" to remain permanently in any church.

Emerson had married his first wife, Miss Ellen Louisa Tucker, in September of 1829, and early in 1831 she had died. It was in 1832 that he resigned his ministry at the Second Church. It is no wonder that the end of a period so filled with anxiety was marked by the breaking down of his own health. On Christmas Day of 1832 he sailed in a small brig for the Mediterranean, and devoted the greater part of 1833 to regaining his strength in Italy, France, and England. The picturesque interest of

foreign lands was less to him than the human, and in this interest he was disappointed, and complained of being "yoked with green, dull, pitiful persons." Indeed, it was the hope of searching out Carlyle, in whose contributions to the English reviews he had detected the accent of a spiritual kinsman, that hurried him from Paris to London, and from London to Craigenputtock in Scotland, where guest and host each discovered in a day and night what was best in the other, and laid the foundations of the friendship which for nearly forty years survived the difficulties of correspondence. The basis of their sympathy has been well defined by Dr. Holmes: "The hatred of unreality was uppermost with Carlyle; the love of what is real and genuine with Emerson." It was through Emerson in the thirties that Carlyle first found an American audience, and through Emerson in 1870 Carlyle's gift of the books he had purchased and used in writing *Cromwell* and *Frederick the Great* was made to Harvard College. It has often been questioned, however, whether the friendship could have been so well maintained if Carlyle had yielded to Emerson's constant solicitations to come to Concord.

In Concord Emerson established himself soon after his return from Europe. Before his second marriage, in 1835, to Miss Lydia Jackson, of Plymouth, he and his mother went to live in the "Old Manse" with the Rev. Dr. Ripley, who

long before had become the second husband of Emerson's grandmother. Here he worked upon his essay, "Nature," which, published anonymously in 1836, was the first important statement of his philosophy; and here he bore the first weeks of grief for the death of his gifted younger "brother of the brief, but blazing star," Edward Bliss Emerson, of whom he wrote in prose, "I am bereaved of a part of myself," and in poetry the lines, "In Memoriam." Within two years died another brother, Charles Chauncy Emerson, who was soon to have married Miss Elizabeth Hoar, of Concord, and Emerson wrote to his young wife: "You must be content henceforth with only a piece of your husband; for the best of his strength lay in the soul with which he must no more on earth take counsel." It was the same phase of the sense of loss which found expression in the "Threnody" on the death of his oldest child, Waldo, in 1842:

"The eager fate which carried thee
Took the largest part of me:
For this losing is true dying;
This is lordly man's down-lying."

When Emerson "dodged the doom of building," and, in 1835, bought the Coolidge house, standing on the road over which the British fled from Concord to Lexington, he settled into the ways of life from which thenceforth he made few departures.

For about three years he continued to preach in one place and another where he was wanted, and then made a complete end of his active ministry. But there were other ways of delivering to men the messages he had to impart, and the lecture took with him the place of the sermon. The growth of the lyceum system was opportune for Emerson. "His, if any one's," said Alcott, "let the institution pass into history, since his art, more than another's, has clothed it with beauty, and made it the place of popular resort." Early and late, east and west, he went about with his lectures, bearing delight and stimulus to many minds. For the discomforts he suffered, his journal speaks:

"It was, in short — this dragging a decorous old gentleman out of home and out of position, to this juvenile career — tantamount to this: 'I'll bet you fifty dollars a day for three weeks that you will not leave your library, and wade, and freeze, and ride, and run, and suffer all manner of indignities, and stand up for an hour each night reading in a hall;' and I answer, 'I'll bet I will.' I do it and win the nine hundred dollars."

The beginnings of this work were made nearer home, in courses of lectures in Boston, in the awakening oration, "The American Scholar," before the Phi Beta Kappa at Harvard, in 1837, and in the address to the Senior Class of the Divinity School at Cambridge, in 1838. The religious radicalism of

this address caused, indeed, what Emerson defined in a letter to Carlyle as a "storm in our washbowl." It determined Emerson's separation from the churches, and, for many years, from his *alma mater*. The University at the close of the war made amends for its share in the estrangement by asking him to speak at the Commemoration exercises; in 1866 he was made an overseer and a Doctor of Laws; and in 1867 he delivered for the second time a Phi Beta Kappa oration. It was after hearing this that Lowell wrote to Mr. Norton the words which described all the weaknesses of Emerson's oratory, especially in later years, and also set forth its peculiar strength:

"It began nowhere, and ended everywhere, and yet, as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way — something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars. . . . He boggled, he lost his place, he had to put on his glasses; but it was as if a creature from some fairer world had lost his way in our fogs, and it was *our* fault, not his."

If the lecturing began near home, the source of the lectures themselves was still more intimate. Through all of Emerson's life he kept a journal, of which he wrote in 1837: "This book is my savings bank. I grow richer because I have somewhere to deposit my earnings, and fractions are worth more to me because corresponding fractions are waiting

I see the inundation sweep,
 I hear the spending of the stream;
 Through gust, through men, through Nature
 Through passion, thought, - through power and dream.

R. W. Alden Emerson

Concord, Massachusetts -
 December 10, 1878.

AUTOGRAPH LINES FROM EMERSON'S "TWO RIVERS."

here that shall be made integers by their addition." To Carlyle Emerson wrote in 1840: "I dot evermore in my endless journal a line on every knowable in nature; but the arrangement loiters long, and I get a brick-kiln instead of a house." From this store of material the builder frequently drew when the time came to write. If his writing has been found disjointed by others, and has seemed to himself a collection of "paragraphs irrepressible, each sentence an infinitely repellent particle," it is well to remember this fractional origin of it. If the form has suffered, surely the spirit has gained in the spontaneity of thoughts recorded almost at the moment of their birth. From the journal to the lecture, from the lecture to the essay, pruned of anecdote and illustration—such was the evolution of a great part of Emerson's prose. Many of the poems had a similar origin. Extracts from the journal have shown his first conceptions, for example, of "The Two Rivers" and "Seashore." Of "Days" there is the remarkable record in the journal for 1852, almost as of another "Kubla Khan":

"I find one state of mind does not remember or conceive of another state. Thus I have written within a twelvemonth verses ('Days') which I do not remember the composition or correction of, and could not write the like to-day, and have only for proof of their being mine various external evidences,

as the manuscripts in which I find them, and the circumstances that I have sent copies to friends, etc. Well, if they had been better, if it had been a noble poem, perhaps it would have only more entirely taken up the ladder into heaven."

Like many other men, Emerson valued his poetry more highly than his prose, because it was not a thing which he could produce at will. "I can breathe at any time," he once said to a friend, "but I can only whistle when the right pucker comes."

In the homely humour of a hundred sentences like this Emerson has left sufficient proof of the qualities that saved him from follies which his friends of the Transcendental brotherhood did not escape. In his own metaphor, he hitched his wagon to a star, but in Dr. Holmes's, "he never let go the string of his balloon." Though he could not bring himself to join the communities of Brook Farm and Fruitlands, he made attempts at home to simplify his mode of life. One of these was to seat his servants at his own table, and the plan was thwarted only by the obduracy of the cook, who looked upon human relations through no mist of theories. At one time he believed in tilling his own ground, but soon after his infant son stopped his work by saying, "Papa, I am afraid you will dig your leg," he surrendered the hoe and spade to hands more skilled in their use. His known

sympathy with all independence of thought brought many a strange "devastator of the day" to his gates, and each was received with friendly consideration. Once a Russian appeared, so bent upon his projects, that he scorned to take off his hat in the house. "Very well, then," said Emerson, "we will talk in the yard," and under the apple-trees the interview was conducted. It must have been of men like this visitor, that Emerson, when one of them wished an introduction to him, said: "Whom God hath put asunder, why should man join together?"

Hawthorne wrote of Concord in 1843: "It was necessary to go but a little way beyond my threshold before meeting with stranger moral shapes of men than might have been encountered elsewhere in a circuit of a thousand miles." These were the pilgrims, "hobgoblins of flesh and blood," who came to see Emerson; but some of the Concord folk themselves were strange enough. George William Curtis could see the drollery of the meetings at Emerson's house in 1845 of a group which contained such persons as Emerson himself, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Alcott, and others, of lesser fame but equally diverse in nature, to whom he might have added Margaret Fuller, Emerson's predecessor in the editorship of the *Transcendental Dial*, if Mr. Greeley had not brought her to earth as a literary critic for the *New York Tribune*. They sat about,

said Curtis, in a silence which seemed to ask, "Who will now proceed to say the finest thing that has ever been said?" The assemblage was not unlike the Boston Transcendental "club of the like-minded," so called, said one of its members, "because no two of us thought alike." To be absolutely one's self, to omit from the mind all that had come to it by tradition — as Emerson once advised a seeker after Transcendental truth — this was the chief intellectual and spiritual purpose of the men who recognised Emerson as their leader. The fulfilment of this purpose led them, of course, in various directions. It took Thoreau, "half college graduate and half Algonquin," after he had given up the making of lead-pencils, because he would not do twice what he had once done well, to the banks of Walden Pond. The good Whittier could see little virtue in an experiment which proved "that if a man is willing to sink himself into a woodchuck he can live as cheaply as that quadruped." But Emerson saw all that was best in Thoreau, for two years an occupant of his house, and Thoreau, with all his individuality, undoubtedly owed much to Emerson. Since Thoreau's death in 1862 the world has been coming every year nearer to Emerson's way of thinking about him, as contrasted with the way of their fellow-townsmen, Judge Hoar, who once asked Colonel Higginson "Why should anyone care to have Thoreau's journals put in print?" The

expression of Alcott's personality bore him into the clouds of philosophic discourse, and the public utterance of the soliloquies to which he gave the strange name of "Conversations." Emerson placed a value on Alcott's mind which was shared by few of his contemporaries, and still fewer of the later generation. At one time he wished that Alcott and his whole family would come and live with him, but Mrs. Alcott's wise veto averted the trouble which would have been sure to follow. Emerson's admiration, however, was tempered by his good sense, and he saw as clearly as anybody the most obvious of Alcott's limitations. For some time, indeed, his eyes were obliged to rest upon a tangible reminder of his friend's shortcomings in practical matters. In 1847 he essayed to build Emerson a summer-house. The result was a structure which, in its first and best estate, Emerson's mother called "The Ruin." Thoreau tried to help him build it, but had to admit: "I feel as if I were nowhere, doing nothing."

The impression of Emerson as dwelling in cloud-land, the central figure in a company of ethereal shapes, is removed when he is seen before other backgrounds than those of Transcendentalism. The good people of Concord began by giving him the office of hogreeve, usually bestowed upon newly married men, and always found him eager for the well-being of the place, not only in wishes, but in

service. If he had given the town nothing but the lines which live with "the embattled farmer" of French's noble statue, it would have been much. But there were many local "occasions" made richer by the voice and wisdom of Emerson. There was no little significance in the words of a simple woman who brought her work to an early end one day to go to a lecture of Emerson's before the Concord Lyceum. When she was asked if she could understand him, she replied: "Not a word, but I like to go and see him stand up there and look as if he thought every one was as good as he was." Through his friendships in Boston, especially after the foundation of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the Saturday Club in 1857, he was brought often into contact with men of the world, in the best sense of that elastic phrase. The names of the men associated with the beginnings of these two organisations are too well known to need repetition. Emerson had great pleasure in their society; and of his effect upon them, perhaps Lowell spoke for all when he wrote to Thomas Hughes: "He is as sweetly high-minded as ever, and when one meets him the Fall of Adam seems a false report. Afterward we feel our throats, and are startled by the tell-tale lump there."

As all men are judged by their companions or the books on their shelves, so we wish to know of the men who lived through the civil war, what was

their part in the conflict or their attitude toward it. Emerson was not to be found in the ranks of aggressive antislavery in the early days when Whittier and Lowell had dedicated their powers to the cause. One so intent upon freedom of thought could not be indifferent to the freedom of men, but violent partisanship of any sort was foreign to Emerson's nature, and for some time his hopefulness made him believe that the differences between the North and South could be adjusted without open disagreement. As the issues defined themselves more clearly, he saw that this could not be. Yet as late as 1855 he favoured the Government's purchase for emancipation of all the slaves in the South for the sum of two thousand millions of dollars. If there had been any doubt that Emerson welcomed the war when it came, it would have been removed by the series of poems which he brought one day to Mr. Fields without a title: the editor named them "Voluntaries," and printed them at once in the *Atlantic Monthly*. At the end of their third portion is the quatrain, quoted as often as any lines of Emerson's:

"So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
 So near is God to man,
 When Duty whispers low, *T'hou must,*
 The youth replies, *I can.*"

Of Emerson's written words which justify the recent statement that he sent ten thousand men to the war,

these pre-eminently breathe the spirit through which he could have wrought such a work.

To Emerson's second visit to Europe, in 1847-48, for the purpose of lecturing in England, we owe his *English Traits*. For him the visit, like the lecturing tours in the Middle States and West, was one of the strong counteracting influences against the dangers of living too long in a small community. In 1871 and 1872 he made the last long journeys of his life, to California and to Europe and the Nile. In the time between these journeys he had been driven from his house in Concord by fire, and on his return from Europe, in May of 1873, he was met not only with the public demonstration of his townsmen, who escorted him with music from the train to his house, but with the private delight of finding the house rebuilt and restored to its former condition through the kindness of personal friends. From this time forth his public appearances were rare, and within a few years they were given over entirely. As Dr. Holmes expressed it in a letter to Lowell: "Emerson is gently fading out like a photograph — the outlines are all there, but the details are getting fainter." There was a gradual failure of the memory, noticeable especially in his attempts to recall the names of familiar objects, and often of dear friends. "My memory hides itself," he said. There was a pathos, touched with humour, in his asking one day for an umbrella after this wise: "I can't tell its name,

but I can tell its history. Strangers take it away." In spite of disabilities, however, he spent much time in his last years in helping Mr. Cabot, his literary executor, to fix the final form of some of his writings. When the end, so gradual in its approach, really came, it came quickly. A severe cold passed into pneumonia, and on April 27th, 1882, Emerson died, within a month of his seventy-ninth birthday.

Those who knew Emerson best found in him something ineffable, something which defied the analysis of words. Those who know him only by tradition find in whatever is told about him the complement of his writings. In them he stands aloof from sordid aims, sufficient unto himself, serene, clear-sighted, sensitive, and hopeful. Matthew Arnold, after an elaborate statement of what he is not as a writer, declares succinctly what he is—"the friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit." From such an one it is not to be expected that all the needs of man will derive sustenance, for man is not a bloodless creature of mind and spirit only. There is more than the

"hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within ;"

but it is to this portion of our nature that Emerson especially ministers. Let none find fault with him for what he is not. Others can give us other

things. Emerson's precious gift is as unmistakably from himself as the life he chose to live was his own.

This were a late hour to begin a new discussion of Emerson's place as an essayist and poet, a philosopher, an interpreter of man to himself, of nature and of universal law. His writings are so easily within the reach of all, that even the few to whom they are closed books have but to open them. "Glad when you speak my thoughts, and skipping the page that has nothing for me:" such was Emerson's own rule of reading, and doubtless he would have had others come to him on the same terms. "If you see truth as he does," said one of his admirers, "you will recognise him for a gifted teacher; if not, there is little or nothing to be said." But whether one's angle of vision corresponds with Emerson's or not, this consideration cannot be overlooked, that of all the emancipating influences which have affected the thought of men since Emerson's voice was first heard in the world, there has probably been among us no single personal agency of wider scope than his. The very men who would be last to confess it are in his debt. Their disagreement from opinions to be found on one page of his writings is in all probability tempered with a generosity which they have learned on another page. "An iconoclast without a hammer," Dr. Holmes once called him, "who took down our

idols from their pedestals so tenderly that it seemed like an act of worship." It is not necessary to share in all the beliefs or unbeliefs of such an iconoclast to gain many things from the imitation of his spirit.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

IT is related of one of our magazines that some years ago it published a story, translated from the German, which was found to be nothing but Hawthorne's "Great Stone Face" restored to its native language. "Here was the story," says Mr. Julian Hawthorne, "sentence for sentence the same, yet as different from it as is a cabbage from a rose." The subtle aroma which marks it as Hawthorne's had entirely escaped. A similar mischance befell Longfellow's "Tell me not in mournful numbers," when it found its way through a Chinese translation back into English as "Do not manifest your discontent in a piece of verse." Such are the penalties of fame for those who must be read in all languages. It is not too fanciful, perhaps, to detect an analogy between these processes of translation and the changes which befall an actual man in becoming the man of biographies. His real life is the original story; the impression it makes upon those who observe it is the translation; the writers of biographies attempt to restore it to its mother tongue. If the divergence is sometimes wide it is no great wonder.

When the subject of these attempts is a man with a personality so baffling as Hawthorne's, the wonder is that he is *re-translated* with any success at all. Precisely contrary opinions of him have been placed upon record. He was one thing in his daily life, and quite another in his books. His son Julian, though eighteen years old when his father died, read none of Hawthorne's books until after that time, and then could not understand how such a man as the father he had known was their author. When *The Scarlet Letter* appeared, a good friend wrote to Hawthorne: "I should fancy from your books that you were burdened with secret sorrow; that you had some blue chamber in your soul, into which you hardly dared to enter yourself; but when I see you, you give me the impression of a man as healthy as Adam was in Paradise." Hawthorne definitely objected to the unveiling of his real self in public, and would have been well content to let his works of fiction and his *Note-Books* speak for him. Indeed, the autobiography of his spirit is writ large in all his many volumes; but his representatives, in spite of his recorded wish that this might suffice, have seen fit to be more explicit. It must be said in their justification that they have helped the world at least in coming somewhat nearer to a true estimate of one who did not belong only to them, but joined himself to the greatness of the literature of the English tongue.

A critic across the seas once spoke of Hawthorne as "the ghost of New England." Although it was not intended that this phrase should be taken in its most obvious sense, it may surely be said that there was good reason for the author and his books to be haunted with the past of his native land. The son of the first American Hawthorne (as Hawthorne himself wrote the name throughout his boyhood) was a stern judge in the witch trials at Salem, and is said to have called down upon himself from one found guilty of witchcraft a curse not unlike Matthew Maule's upon Colonel Pyncheon. Perhaps it was this curse which prevented the family of Hawthorne, mariners through many generations, from achieving the material success of other seafaring families in Salem. They did succeed, however, in transmitting to Hawthorne certain well-defined traits of New England character, especially an independent vigour of spirit which in itself is no mean inheritance. His mother, Elizabeth Clarke Manning, came of another family long established in Salem. That she was by no means an ordinary person may be inferred from the fact that when her husband died of yellow fever in Surinam in 1808, she restricted herself to the privacy of her own house and room, and did not emerge from it through the remaining forty-one years of her life. She was but twenty-eight at the time of Captain Nathaniel Hawthorne's death, and of the three children that were left to

her, the oldest and the youngest were daughters. Her son Nathaniel was born in Salem on July 4, 1804. If her spirit and influence had not bequeathed a strange equipment of sensibility to her children, it would be time to look about for new theories touching the early formation of character.

Hawthorne was an active, well-formed boy, as he was a man of uncommon physical beauty. But an accident to one of his feet, while he was playing at "bat-and-ball" one day, rendered him quite lame for a portion of his youth, in which he acquired voracious habits of reading, and fortunately the English classics were the books within his reach. An event of even more important influence was the early removal of his family to Raymond, Maine, where his mother's people owned a large tract of land. "It was there," said Hawthorne in later life, "that I first got my cursed habits of solitude." The woods about Sebago Lake, the ice that covered it in winter, gave him free foot for solitary excursions under sun and stars. He lived, he said, like a bird of the air. But his mother, for all her own seclusion, would not have the boy grow up in complete separation from men, and sent him back to Salem, where a private instructor prepared him for entrance to Bowdoin College. Longfellow was one of his classmates, though not of his intimates in college. Horatio Bridge, afterwards Paymaster-General of the Navy, was both, and, moreover, was acknowl-

edged by Hawthorne as the friend who was responsible for his becoming an author. In the class above him was Franklin Pierce, a lifelong friend, of whom Hawthorne could write when both were growing old, "I do not love him one whit the less for having been President." At his graduation, in 1825, Hawthorne's college rank was eighteenth in a class of thirty-eight, but, especially in "the humanities," he had acquired some sound learning, and in his long walks and frank intercourse with his best friends, he had doubtless gained a knowledge of himself and of them which was to serve him well.

As a period of human companionships Hawthorne's four years at college stand out in bright relief. He had come there from a solitary boyhood, and emerged into a manhood still more solitary. While all his friends were taking up active pursuits, he established himself with his mother and sisters at Salem, whither they had returned to live in the house of his grandfather Manning. Instead of undertaking any recognised work, "year after year," he said, "I kept on considering what I was fit for." But he had known for a long time. Even as a boy he had written from Salem to his mother in Maine: "What do you think of my becoming an author, and relying for support upon my pen? Indeed, I think the illegibility of my handwriting is very author-like. How proud you would be to see my books praised by the reviewers

as equal to the proudest productions of the scribbling sons of John Bull." In pursuance of this inclination he seems to have made up his mind in college to adopt the profession of authorship; once committed to it, and conscious of the powers within him, he would not permit himself or others to turn them cheaply to account. His first book, *Seven Tales of My Native Land*, he burned in manuscript. His second, *Fanshawe*, a novel, he made every effort to disown and suppress. What he desired above and beyond any immediate success was to do only such work as he felt to be worthy of him.

It was a strange apprenticeship to which he bound himself. It is hard to think of another writer whose young manhood is not to be regarded in the light of its outward circumstances. Nearly all the circumstances of Hawthorne's life for some years after his leaving college were inward. Though possessed of such beauty of person that an old gipsy woman, meeting him suddenly in the woods, exclaimed, "Are you a man or an angel?" and though sought out for a time by the "good society" of his native town, he kept himself resolutely to himself. "For months together," to repeat his own words, "I scarcely held human intercourse outside of my own family, seldom going out except at twilight, or only to take the nearest way to the most convenient solitude, which was oftenest the seashore. . . . Once a year or thereabouts I used to make an excursion of

a few weeks, in which I enjoyed as much of life as other people in the whole year round." He doubted whether so many as twenty persons in Salem were aware of his existence. Within his mother's house, his cloistral habits were not infringed upon. For months at a time he scarcely saw his older sister, who was almost as strict a recluse as his mother. Both of these ladies had their meals brought to their separate rooms. Indeed, this was Mrs. Hawthorne's unbroken custom from the time of her husband's death. In the evening she and her younger daughter used to come down to the little parlour and sit with Hawthorne. Love and respect seem to have gone out from each corner of the curious personal quadrangle to each and all of the other corners, but the life of the family could not have been such as to make amends in any way for the dearth of human influences from without.

Hawthorne, to be sure, maintained a certain contact with mankind through correspondence with his college friends, and by means of his occasional excursions into the world. It marked him as a man of uncommon mould that by looking merely into himself, and drawing forth what he found there, he could produce so much that was worth producing, for this is not the usual result of such a process. In his room at Salem, which has been well called "the ante-chamber of his fame," he read and wrote interminably. The results of this labour were pub-

lished in the magazines of the day, and in Goodrich's annual, *The Token*, where Willis's first efforts were rapidly winning him fame, while Hawthorne's attracted so little attention that he could call himself with some truth, "the obscurest man of letters in America." It was twelve years after his graduation from college — that is, in 1837 — that the first collection of *Twice-Told Tales* brought together the best of his work for this period. Longfellow wrote an appreciative review of it for *The North American*, and so moved Hawthorne, that he despatched a hearty letter to his old classmate, saying: "Whether or no the public will agree to the praise you bestow on me, there are at least five persons who think you the most sagacious critic on earth — viz., my mother and two sisters, my old maiden aunt, and finally — the sturdiest believer of the whole five — my own self." It is no wonder that the praise of Longfellow brought true pleasure to one who complained that for lack of approbation he had "always written with benumbed fingers." He could not have been blind to the relation between his life and his *Tales* even before 1851, when he wrote in the preface of a new edition: "The book, if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown, twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages."

Hawthorne had come out from his twilight atmos-

phere for a short time before the publication of *Twice-Told Tales* to edit an ill-fated *American Magazine of Knowledge* in Boston, and would have stood in a still more glaring light if his desire to be appointed historian of a Government expedition to the South Polar seas had been fulfilled. He gained no glory by the anonymous writing of *Peter Parley's Universal History* (1837). Two events which soon took place, however, brought about all-important changes in the course of his life, and saved him from the dangers of continuing longer in his career of solitude. The one was his appointment by George Bancroft, in 1839, as weigher and gauger in the Boston Custom-House; the other was his engagement to Miss Sophia Peabody, of Salem, which occurred at about the same time.

It cannot be imagined that the life Hawthorne had been leading could naturally bring him to matrimony. But for his writings it is to be doubted whether his path would ever have crossed that of the Peabody family. The three sisters of that name, however, had read and admired certain fugitive pieces of writing which they had succeeded in tracing to their townsman, and through the rather difficult mediation of his sisters, they made his acquaintance. This was in 1837, and neither Hawthorne's reserve nor Sophia Peabody's invalidism could have given promise of the result. Uninterruptedly from her twelfth year she had been

afflicted with an acute nervous headache. She had felt that she must never marry, yet her illness had served to heighten all the beauties of a nature inherently beautiful, and Hawthorne recognised her for what she was; nor did she fail, early or late, to see in Hawthorne the incarnation of all her ideals. When they became conditionally engaged she said to him, "If God intends us to marry, He will let me be cured; if not, it will be a sign that it is not best." It was not only possible for them to marry in 1842, but from that time forth her malady never returned.



HAWTHORNE'S AUTOGRAPH.

It was an abrupt transition for Hawthorne from the quiet of Salem to the Boston wharves, noisy with the unloading of coal-schooners. But he toiled faithfully at his work of supervision, and did not let the opportunity of observing keenly the ways of men and of his own heart pass unimproved. His next change of surroundings provided him with contrasts no less striking, for in 1841 he joined his fortunes with those of the Brook Farm community. Here he toiled like a veritable Hodge, and stored his mind and his *Note-Books* with many impressions which found their way into *The Blithedale*

Romance ten years later. Emerson suggested many of the shortcomings of the Brook Farm experiment when he wrote: "The ladies again took cold on washing-days, and it was ordained that the gentlemen shepherds should hang out the clothes, which they punctually did; but a great anachronism followed in the evening, for when they began to dance the clothes-pins dropped plentifully from their pockets." Hawthorne, too, had so clear a vision for the humour of things, that he could not take himself and his "brethren in affliction," as he called them, altogether seriously in their new life. The eight cows and the "transcendental heifer belonging to Miss Margaret Fuller" were never complete realities to him, though he worked hard in the barnyard. There was, however, sufficient reality in the loss of his Custom-House savings, which he had invested in the community, and in his failure to satisfy himself that the farm would be the best place for him to begin his married life.

He could not have chosen a better place for this purpose than the Old Manse at Concord, where he and his bride took up their abode in the summer of 1842. The introductory paper to the *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846) tells with inimitable charm as much as Hawthorne was willing to tell of the delight of his new life. He frankly declares himself to be not "one of those supremely hospitable people who serve up their own hearts, delicately fried, with brain

sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public." One cannot help feeling that something like this has been done in the publication of Mrs. Hawthorne's intimate letters written at this time. But the life which they reveal was filled with ideal beauty, the more rare because it remained unchanged till the end. In these early days Hawthorne is seen raising vegetables, which acquire from his care a flavour unknown before on earth; nobly cooking and washing dishes in domestic emergencies; and rejoicing his young wife with long evenings of reading aloud. How shrewd an eye she herself possessed, a single bit of winter landscape-drawing will show: "One afternoon Mr. Emerson and Mr. Thoreau went with him down the river. Henry Thoreau is an experienced skater, and was figuring dithyrambic dances and Bacchic leaps on the ice—very remarkable, but very ugly, methought. Next him followed Mr. Hawthorne, wrapped in his cloak, moved like a self-impelled Greek statue, stately and grave. Mr. Emerson closed the line, evidently too weary to hold himself erect, pitching headforemost, half lying on the air." The deeper spiritual understanding constantly shown in these letters of Mrs. Hawthorne's made her a wife in whose comradeship her husband could not suffer again from loneliness. The birth of his daughter Una at Concord rendered Hawthorne's home still more completely the centre of his life. The scene, however,

was not to remain long unchanged, and late in 1845 the little family left the Manse, and moved to Salem, where Hawthorne soon received President Polk's appointment as surveyor in the Custom-House.

It is hardly surprising that the prosaic duties of the radically new surroundings were not productive at once of literary results. But when a little more than three years had passed, during which time his son was born, his mother died, and Hawthorne himself suffered political decapitation, he was ready to show the world that the years had not gone in vain. His wife hailed the release from office as the opportunity for writing his book, and to her husband's amazement brought forth a sum of money which she had been saving against a rainy day. His mind was doubtless full of *The Scarlet Letter*, for it took him only six months to write it, amid the distractions of his mother's fatal illness and his own sufferings of care and pain. James T. Fields has told with what difficulty he forced Hawthorne, when the book was done, even to admit that he had been about such a piece of work, and to surrender up the manuscript. The publisher's delight in the story as a work of art seems to have exceeded his belief in it as a commercial venture, for as soon as the first edition of five thousand copies was printed the type was distributed. In ten days the entire edition was sold, and all the printers' work had to be done over again. The book was published in 1850,

and won the world's instant recognition, at home and abroad, of Hawthorne's consummate literary skill and penetrating vision into the mysteries of the human soul. Thenceforth his fame was secure.

Thenceforth, also, his physical powers were as those of a man no longer young. With the hope that change might be of benefit, he moved in 1850 with his family to Lenox, and lived for a little more than a year in a small red farmhouse, which bore to his eyes the aspect of the Scarlet Letter. Here his youngest child was born, and here he wrote *The House of the Seven Gables* — which he frankly called “a more natural book for me to write than *The Scarlet Letter* was,” and also *The Wonder Book*, projected some years before, it appears, as a thing to be done in collaboration with Longfellow. Here, too, he is seen in intercourse with friends and his children, which showed him to be something other than the brooding mystic of his books, and the moody, inaccessible creature of common report. His son tells of his own boyish delight in the nutting excursions in which the father, standing beneath a great walnut-tree, used to bid the children turn their backs and cover their faces, till they heard a shout above them, when they looked up to see Hawthorne, “a delightful mystery and miracle,” in the topmost branches. Such are the brighter glimpses of the Lenox life, from which an increasing spirit of unrest bore Hawthorne with his family,

before the end of 1851, back to the neighbourhood of Boston. The winter that followed was spent in the house of Mrs. Hawthorne's brother-in-law, Horace Mann, at West Newton, and here *The Blithedale Romance* was written between the first of December and the end of April. The three years brought to a close by this performance are almost without parallel in the importance of their productivity.

The time had come for Hawthorne to establish himself more permanently in one place, and Concord, the town of his happiest days, was naturally chosen. Here he bought from Alcott the house known as "Wayside," standing a little farther from the village than Emerson's dwelling upon the same road. It was told of Hawthorne in Lenox that when in his walks he saw the approach of any one to whom he might have to talk, he would suddenly leave the road and take to the pasture beside it. His aversion to promiscuous intercourse kept him in Concord from taking any such part in the village life as Emerson took. Alcott, his next-door neighbour, has told how difficult it was to see him except as a hare vanishing in the shrubbery on the hill behind his house. Here he used to walk to and fro for hours under the larches in the path which he called "the only remembrance of me that will remain." Emerson's son has recorded the one formal visit paid by Hawthorne to his father's

house, on a certain Sunday evening when the caller, to cover his shyness, began looking at pictures in a stereoscope. He asked what the scenes were, and was much surprised to hear that they were the Concord Court and Town House and Common, all of which his body must have passed, at least occasionally, though his spirit was elsewhere. Another resident of Concord, the clear-sighted Henry James, Sr., in writing to Emerson of a Saturday Club dinner at which Hawthorne was present, said: "He has the look all the time, to one who does n't know him, of a rogue who finds himself suddenly in a company of detectives." Hawthorne himself knew that the dinner-table of any house but his own was not the best place for him, and once said: "I have an almost miraculous power of escaping from necessities of this kind. Destiny itself has often been worsted in the attempt to get me out to dinner."

That such a man, after two experiences of political office, should have been removed again from private life was one of the anomalies of his career. The writing of the *Tanglewood Tales* soon after his removal to Concord was more what might have been expected of him than any mingling in a presidential campaign. But his friend Pierce had been nominated for the Presidency, and Hawthorne hastened to his support with the offer of any service in his power. This, he was told, might best be

a campaign life of the candidate. When it was written, and Pierce was elected, of course it was said that the book paid the price of the good appointment to the Liverpool consulate. This criticism had its sufficient answer, for Hawthorne and for all minds capable of generous judgment, in the friendship between him and Pierce, long before his presidency and long after it. The outward episode revealed less of Hawthorne than an anecdote related by Pierce. When he was nominated, "Hawthorne came to see him, sat down by him on a sofa, and after a melancholy silence, heaving a deep sigh, said, 'Frank, *what* a pity!' Then, after a pause, 'But, after all, this world was not meant to be happy in — only to succeed in!'"

Hawthorne succeeded well enough at Liverpool, where he performed the duties of consul from 1853 to 1857. For three years after his resignation he remained abroad, especially in Italy and England, enjoying some of the most satisfying friendships of his life, and writing or preparing to write the books which fixed his fame more firmly from year to year, even after his death, when the passages from his various *Note-Books* were published. The literary result of sojourns in Europe would furnish forth a chapter by itself in any account of American writers. The effect of foreign lands upon Irving, Cooper, Willis, and a score of others were no unfruitful theme. Here it suffices to be thankful for

its provocation of Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*. His *Italian Note-Books* show how the scenes of Italy were preparing him to write the *Romance of Monte-Beni*. Outside of Florence he made the first sketch for the book. In the summer of 1859 he returned to England to write it, and chiefly at Redcar, on the Yorkshire coast, and at Leamington, the work was done in time to be published by March of 1860. The London publishers insisted upon giving it the title of *Transformation*, against Hawthorne's wish. It was his preference also not to write for the second edition the "Conclusion" which is now joined to the last chapter. But there were objections of vagueness, and Hawthorne was willing to meet half-way the whimsical suggestion of Motley: "To those who complain, I suppose that nothing less than an illustrated edition, with a large gallows on the last page, with Donatello in the most pensile of attitudes — his ears revealed through a white night-cap — would be satisfactory." When Longfellow read the book he found "the old, dull pain in it that runs through all Hawthorne's writings," but he found it also "wonderful;" and so did the world.

When Hawthorne came back to America and re-established himself at "Wayside," in 1860, the country stood on the threshold of war. As a friend of Pierce he was, to say the least, not a friend of the Northern party which was readiest for the

struggle. But when it began, the consciousness that he had a country stirred him to regret that he was too old to carry a musket; the compensating joy was that his son was too young. A War Democrat like Hawthorne was not precisely the person from whom one would expect an article "Chiefly About War Matters" for the vigorously Northern *Atlantic Monthly*. Yet a paper under this title, signed "By a Peaceable Man," was the result of a visit he paid to Washington in the spring of 1862. The foot-notes which accompanied it protested against the disloyalty of some of the writer's words. "Can it be a son of old Massachusetts who utters this abominable sentiment? For shame!" So read one of the notes, fairly typical of all. Donald G. Mitchell detected Hawthorne's touch in the article, and wrote to him as one "ready to swear at the marginal impertinences. Pray, is Governor Andrew editor?" The truth, revealed some years later, was that Hawthorne himself, requested by James T. Fields to make certain omissions, had made them, at the same time writing the foot-notes and befooling the public with the remonstrances against himself.

The strain of the almost fatal illness of Una Hawthorne in Rome had seriously sapped her father's strength. Neither his physical condition nor the mental state induced by the war, was propitious for literary production. Yet in the few

years that followed his return from Europe he wrote, in the quiet tower added to the "Wayside" house, the papers which filled the volume of *Our Old Home*, besides the fiction which has been published since his death, under the titles of *Septimius Felton*, *The Dolliver Romance*, and *Dr. Grimshawe's Secret*. True to a constant friendship, he insisted, against all the protests of his publisher, upon dedicating *Our Old Home* to Franklin Pierce, whose unpopular name was sure to excite hostility to the book. However fully the publisher's fears were borne out, Hawthorne's own name is memorably the brighter for his devotion to a friend. In England, it must be said, the book gave other cause for offence, in that Hawthorne, speaking of the English woman in her riper age and portlier dimensions, made bold to say, "You inevitably think of her as made up of steaks and sirloins," and to venture other remarks equally unflattering. Yet the book has not been unknown even in recent years to serve in England the purpose to which travellers in Rome sometimes put *The Marble Faun* — a prosaic test, if you will, to apply to a work which does not make utility its first aim.

Happily it is not needed here to follow Hawthorne closely through all the days of failing strength. More than a year before the final failure Longfellow made the record, "He looks gray and grand, with something very pathetic about him." In March

of 1864 his health was so broken that a journey to Washington was attempted with hopes of improvement. His travelling companion was his friend and publisher, William D. Ticknor. Hawthorne was gaining in strength, when, with appalling suddenness, Mr. Ticknor died in Philadelphia. Instead of being the object of care, Hawthorne found himself borne down by the most sorrowful of responsibilities. He returned to Concord far worse than he had left it. This was in April. In May another attempt was made to restore him by means of a driving tour with Franklin Pierce through the White Mountains. The travellers went only as far as Plymouth, in New Hampshire, and here in the darkness before the sunrise of May 19, death came to Hawthorne while he slept. His burial, at Sleepy Hollow, in Concord, took place on May 23. Within a few days his wife, who needed no human consolations, wrote with gladness: "There can be no death nor loss for me for evermore. . . . God gave me the rose of time; the blossom of the ages to call my own for twenty-five years of human life."

The variety of the attempts to apply epithets of accurate definition to Hawthorne and his writings recalls the fate of a bust for which he sat in Rome. The clay, a good likeness, was finished, and handed over to the marble-cutters to be reproduced in stone. While this process was going forward an American, who might have known better, directed

the workmen, on his own responsibility, to make certain changes in the lower part of the face, with the result that the finished bust, in the words of Hawthorne's son, "looks like a combination of Daniel Webster and George Washington." Something like this happens when words like "glimmering" and "cobwebby," well enough as far as they go, are too freely used to describe the attributes of Hawthorne. Different eyes see different things in his books, just as the man differed in the circles of intimacy and of the outer world. The remodelled bust doubtless suited the interfering critic better than the truer likeness. Mr. Howells, when he had met the man face to face, said, "Hawthorne's *look* was different from that of any picture of him that I have seen." And so it may be said of his writings that the terms used for their definition never quite define them. To characterise the obvious is easy enough. But there are personalities and works of art about which the last word in modification of any confident statement is far to seek. To a certain degree it defines them merely to make this assertion about them. Let us be satisfied with making it of Hawthorne and of his books. What he is, in our heritage from his pen, is immeasurably more important than any words about him. It is enough that the stony soil of New England could bear such fruits of the imagination as he has garnered for our wonder and delight.

WALT WHITMAN

INSTEAD of defining Walt Whitman as an "American Bookman," one might with greater justice describe him and his *Leaves of Grass* — for they are virtually one — as an American Book and a Man. It is merely a distinction of syllables, yet it has an important significance. The precise significance of Whitman, with relation to other poets, has never been more truly pointed out by an admirer than by Mr. John Burroughs in these words: "Just as ripe, mellowed, storied, ivy-towered, velvet-turfed England lies back of Tennyson, and is vocal through him; just as canny, covenanting, conscience-burdened, craggy, sharp-tongued Scotland lies back of Carlyle; just as thrifty, well-schooled, well-housed, prudent, and moral New England lies back of her group of poets, and is voiced by them, — so America as a whole, our turbulent democracy, our self-glorification, our faith in the future, our huge mass-movements, our continental spirit, our sprawling, sublime, and unkempt nature lie back of Whitman and are implied by his work."

In the life of the man who proclaims himself the mouthpiece of these national qualities, it would be idle to look for the circumstances which enter into the making of other men who have made books, since books in any large measure expressive of these qualities have not hitherto been made. It must not be expected, therefore, to follow him through college and foreign travel, and into friendships and domestic relations which make conspicuously for what are called the refinements of life. He constantly spoke in his writings of the "literats" as a class distinct from himself. His book, he maintained, is not to be viewed as a literary performance, but merely as an attempt to put a Person "freely, fully, and truly on record." This person is of course Walt Whitman, not merely Walt Whitman the private citizen, but also Walt Whitman as he conceived himself, "a great, composite *democratic individual*, male or female," ready to "raise high the perpendicular hand" to every person and every experience to be found on earth. It is the first step toward any acceptance of Whitman to accept him in this double personality. Whether the "composite, democratic individual" is or is not a person to one's liking in every respect, the *Leaves of Grass* speak for him in unmistakable terms. For Walt Whitman, the private citizen, his life speaks with an equal clearness. There are few writers whose lives and whose writings are so com-

pletely at one. It is therefore more than commonly helpful, in arriving at a true estimate of Walt Whitman as a writer, to gain a clear knowledge of him as a man.

The poet of democracy has need to be born and bred of the people, and Whitman had all the fitness for his work which comes from such a birth and breeding. His father, Walter W. Whitman, was a skilful carpenter and builder, living on a farm which his father and grandfather had owned before him at West Hills, Huntington Township, Long Island. Here his wife, Louisa Van Velsor, of a neighbouring Dutch family of farmers, also long established in the region, and famed for the raising of horses, bore him a son, Walter, the second of nine children, on May 31st, 1819. To distinguish the boy from his father, his name was abbreviated in common use to Walt, and its owner, except in signing his early, conventional attempts at authorship, did not permit the years to restore the lost syllable. He was not five years old when his family removed to Brooklyn, where he went to the public schools, and "tended" in a lawyer's and doctor's office, until at the age of fourteen he was set to learn the printer's trade. Two years of this work were followed by a period of country-school teaching and "boarding round" in the neighbourhood of his birthplace. To this experience he owed some of his "deepest lessons in human nature behind the scenes and in

the masses." Moreover, he was then at the time of life for Nature to teach him her best lessons, and the images of sea and shore, which appear and reappear in his writings, show that he learned them well. In 1839 and 1840 he is seen in his native town of Huntington as the founder and publisher of a weekly newspaper, *The Long Islander*. For the most part his boyhood and younger manhood differed in few outward respects from those of youths who go on to be good mechanics and tradesmen, or rural teachers and editors. Nor did the years that followed his return to New York and Brooklyn, in 1840, conspicuously foretell what was to come. Yet it was mainly in the fifteen years which preceded the first publication of *Leaves of Grass*, in 1855, that Whitman was traversing the "long foreground" into which Emerson's keen eye pierced its way when the book appeared. The elements of this foreground were the permanent elements of Whitman's thought, except for the great additions that were made to it by his experiences in the civil war. Though his productions in prose and verse were printed in the magazines of the day, they were not distinguished for individual merit, and he took no uncommon place as a writer. It was rather as a compositor in printing-offices, and then as the editor of a daily paper, the Brooklyn *Eagle*, that he provided himself with his slender sufficiency of money. It was still more as the observer and sharer of the life

about him that he passed his days. The spectacles of the harbour and Broadway were his delight. The pilots on the ferry-boats, in which he crossed from Brooklyn to New York over and over again for mere pleasure, were his friends. Talking on all manner of subjects with them, giving and taking, lending a copy of Homer to a youth who swabbed the deck, listening to long accounts of their work and thoughts, thus he passed whole afternoons and even nights. Of some of these friends he wrote at a later time, "When we meet we kiss each other (I am an exception to all their customs with others)." The drivers of the Broadway stages were equally his intimates. Sitting on the box beside them, their life for the time became his. One winter, in order to keep a disabled driver's place for him, he drove a stage himself. To museums and theatres, and especially to the opera, he paid frequent visits. Then there were solitary days of walking, reading, and bathing at the seashore. In all these ways the multiform life about him was taken into himself and made a living part of his own nature.

Yet the "foreground" would have been incomplete if its horizon had not been spread beyond that of New York and its vicinity, for the national sense enters as strongly into Whitman's completeness as the spirit of "Manahatta my city." This enlargement of view was brought about in 1848 and

1849 by what Whitman called "a leisurely journey and working expedition" with his brother "Jeff" through the Middle States, down the Ohio and Mississippi, to New Orleans, where he served on the editorial staff of *The Crescent*. Thence he returned by easy stages up the Mississippi and Missouri, and home by the way of the Great Lakes and Lower Canada. Back in Brooklyn in 1850, he published and edited *The Freeman*, a newspaper of his own, for about two years, after which he undertook the business of building and selling small houses. It seems to have been the danger of growing rich that made him abandon this enterprise.

Still one important element seems needed to complete the foreground for *Leaves of Grass* — an active personal share, more than the portion of a mere observer, in many expressions of man's physical nature. The testimony of Whitman's friends is that he was essentially a temperate man in all respects. If in the years from 1840 to 1855 "he sounded all experiences of life," as one well-accredited biographer has said, he was not one to disown his conduct, for he empowered John Addington Symonds to publish his statement: "My life, young manhood, mid-age, times South, etc., have been jolly bodily, and doubtless open to criticism." It would be no less misleading, in considering Whitman, to withhold these facts than to interpret them in the light of his poems without



it was no more strange that it met with hostility than that "the average person," utterly ignorant of Wagner and his intentions, should not rejoice in a first hearing of the most "Wagnerian" portions of *Tristan and Isolde*, or that another person quite unacquainted with impressionist art should experience scant pleasure in finding himself in a room full of Monet's pictures. Whitman's very themes, regarded in the light in which he saw them, forbade a cordial welcome. "The main objects of his enthusiasm" have been defined by Symonds as "America, Self, Sex, the People." To treat these themes in a series of "slack-twisted" dithyrambic chants, apparently flying in the face of all poetic tradition, and written with a frankness and egotism and lack of humour which, after forty years of Whitman "in the air," are still detested by many, was inevitably to court the opposition of "persons of taste." The critics representing these persons fell upon the book with a savage fury. The writer of it was "a beast;" he "should be kicked from all decent society." To one London journal he appeared as "a wild Tupper of the West;" another, commenting upon a later edition, declared: "Of all writers we have perused, Walt Whitman is the most silly, the most blasphemous, and the most disgusting." The bitterest condemnations of the book were due to its many offences against "the proprieties." Most men could not possibly take its unfamiliar

point of view immediately. After many years the New York *Tribune* echoed but faintly the first voices of denunciation when it said: "The chief question raised by this publication is whether anybody—even a poet—ought to take off his trousers in the market-place."

Such were the views most commonly held regarding the *Leaves of Grass*. But there were those, neither fools nor blind, who saw many other things in the book. In England, where Whitman has found many of his best admirers, a prompt word of appreciation was spoken by Richard Monckton Milnes (not yet Lord Houghton), in a letter to Hawthorne at the Liverpool consulate: "I wanted to see you mainly for your own sake, and also to ask you about an American book which has fallen into my hands. It is called *Leaves of Grass*, and the author calls himself Walt Whitman. Do you know anything about him? I will not call it *poetry*, because I am unwilling to apply that word to a work totally destitute of art; but, whatever we call it, it is a most notable and true book. It is not written *virginibus puerisque*; but as I am neither the one nor the other, I may express my admiration of its vigorous virility and bold, natural truth. There are things in it that read like the old Greek plays. It is of the same family as those delightful books of Thoreau's which you introduced me to, and which are so little known and valued here." In America

Whitman had the satisfaction of winning at once the highest opinion of the man whose good opinion was worth most at the time—namely, Emerson. It is said that Whitman knew nothing of Emerson's writings before producing the *Leaves of Grass*, yet if Emerson had withheld his hand from one whose practice so conspicuously reflected his own preaching of the gospel of individuality, this preaching would have seemed a mockery. Wide as the gulf between the two men must have appeared, Emerson took no account of it when he handed a copy of Whitman's book to a friend and said, "Americans abroad may now come home: unto us a man is born." He sent a copy of the book to Carlyle, not without misgivings, calling it "a nondescript monster, which yet had terrible eyes and buffalo strength, and was indisputably American;" and he added, "after you have looked into it, if you think, as you may, that it is only an auctioneer's inventory of a warehouse, you can light your pipe with it." There were no misgivings, however, in the words of thanks which he sent to Whitman himself for his gift of the book. "I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. . . . I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. . . . I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which must yet have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start." With a letter in his pocket from Emerson saying such

words as these, Whitman, though needing no confidence but his own, could well afford to write, "Why should I hurry or compromise?" From the general storm of abuse which greeted his book, he did shield and recover himself in the summer and autumn of 1855 by going to the east end of Long Island. When he came back to New York it was, he said, "with the confirmed resolution to go on with my poetic enterprise in my own way, and finish it as well as I could."

The carrying out of this enterprise was Whitman's work for the rest of his life, for even his vivid share in the life of the war time may be regarded in the closest relation with his poetic purpose. It is not possible here to follow the book through all its fortunes and misfortunes of successive editions and gradual growth. When the second edition appeared in 1856, Emerson had good reason to be annoyed at finding his sentence, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career," printed in letters of gold over his name on the back of the volume. But he had the good sense to know that the standards of taste in Whitman's Brooklyn were different from those of his own Concord, and when Whitman came to Boston, in 1860, to superintend the issue of his third edition, Emerson took so great an interest in the undertaking that he walked for two hours up and down the Beacon Street mall of the Common, arguing with Whitman for the omission of many

things in the "Children of Adam" poems. Whitman listened without contention, knowing, as he said, "I could never hear the points better put — and then I felt down in my soul the clear and unmistakable conviction to disobey all, and pursue my own way." When the seventh edition of the poems was brought out in Boston, in 1881, the threat of official prosecution, on the ground of the objections urged by Emerson, caused the publishers, who had known well what they were doing, to abandon the book with incontinent haste. But publishers in Philadelphia were not slow to take it up, and after growing year by year, until Whitman's death, the book has returned to Boston, committed by the literary executors of the author to a young house which has made Whitman its first enterprise.

It has been the present writer's fortune to see a few of the many note-books — simple, home-made things — in which Whitman jotted down his thoughts, and entered words and phrases that took his fancy, with their meanings and derivations. Here may be found such favourite terms of his own as "kosmos" and "literated" and "rondure," noted with a carefulness that would have seemed almost superfluous for a man without a certain consciousness that he was conducting his own education. Here the sentences which from time to time found their way into his chants are marked off as of no further use. We are told that these note-books

To those who've fail'd.

To those whose fail'd in aspirations rest
To unnamed soldiers fall'n in front, on
the lead

To calm, devoted engineers - to over-ardent
travelers - to pilots on their ships,
to many a song and picture without
parturition - I'd rear a laud. Cover'd

High monument
High, above the rest - to all cut off
before their time.

Possess'd by some great spirit of fire,
Quench'd by an early death!

Wall. Whitman

were always with him, and that writing more literally with "his eye on the object" than most poets, his thoughts were put into their first form wherever he might happen to be. That their final form was the result of offhand work is a mistaken idea, for his manuscripts often show with what careful elaboration his lines were wrought. Mr. Stedman has called him "more formal than others in his non-conformity, and haughtier in his plainness than many in their pride." Certainly it is not without suggestion that the title which he chose for his first book defined all his subsequent work not in prose, and remains as the title of all that he did through nearly forty years. Few writers have maintained an identity so unvarying, so sure of its right to permanence. Time somewhat mellowed and broadened its expression. At first his cry was, "I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world." Later it became, "Over the tree-tops I float thee a song." But this was in his threnody for Lincoln, and the events of which Lincoln was the centre were the chief influences that brought the man and the poet to completeness.

To understand the effect of the war in widening his poetic scope, national and human, it is necessary only to see how his life tallied with it—if one of his own words may be used. When his brother George, afterward lieutenant-colonel in his New York regiment, was wounded at Fredericksburg, in 1862,

Whitman, at an hour's notice, started from Brooklyn to care for him. His wound was not severe, and the new-comer at the front soon found himself in Washington caring for other Brooklyn soldiers sent thither from camp in his charge. Gradually this care-taking extended itself to wounded soldiers in general, from both sides, in the army hospitals chiefly in Washington. In this capacity, rather of comforter than of nurse, Whitman gave of his best to the soldiers till the war was over. No man could have been better qualified for such a task. His habit of life had made him the comrade of all, especially the obscure. Unmarried — through an "overmastering passion," as he said, "for entire freedom, unconstraint" — he was checked by none of the ties which bind other men from holding their lives cheap. Blessed with a feminine gift of sympathy, which made children and weak persons instinctively trust in him, his touch and word were often what the wounded men needed most. His very physical presence was comforting. When Lincoln, looking from the White House window, saw Whitman pass, his word was, "Well, *he* looks like a man!" Six feet in height, of vigorous mould and carriage, ruddy of skin, bearded and gray of hair since thirty, given to frequent baths, the cleanest linen and simple clothes, he carried about with him an air of health and sunlight. By friends in Northern cities he was supplied with the means for

bringing more tangible things to the hospitals. A friend who once went his rounds with him has told of what he saw, and a part of the record must speak for the whole of a beneficent service, a personal ministrations, it has been estimated, to about one hundred thousand men. "From cot to cot they called him, often in tremulous tones or in whispers; they embraced him; they touched his hand; they gazed at him. To one he gave a few words of cheer; for another he wrote a letter home; to others he gave an orange, a few comfits, a cigar, a pipe and tobacco, a sheet of paper or a postage-stamp, all of which and many other things were in his capacious haversack. From another he would receive a dying message for mother, wife, or sweetheart; for another he would promise to go an errand; to another, some special friend very low, he would give a manly farewell kiss. He did the things for them no nurse or doctor could do, and he seemed to leave a benediction at every cot as he passed along. The lights had gleamed for hours in the hospital that night before he left it, and as he took his way towards the door, you could hear the voices of many a stricken hero calling, 'Walt, Walt, Walt, come again! Come again!'"

Before the war was over Whitman had the first illness of his life, an attack of "hospital malaria," induced by his labours, which converted him from a young into an old man. But the illness kept him

only a short time from the hospitals, where all the hours which he could spare from his new clerkship in the Department of the Interior were spent. This clerkship itself was short-lived, by reason of his dismissal as the author of *Leaves of Grass*. The incident brought forth W. D. O'Connor's flaming pamphlet, *The Good Gray Poet*, which provided Whitman with a permanent name better than anything he had lost. Another clerkship in the office of the Attorney-General was promptly secured, and there he worked till 1873, when an attack of paralysis, which had its first cause in his hospital service, incapacitated him for all regular labour. Thenceforth, until his death, on March 26th, 1892, he lived in Camden, New Jersey, in health of varying feebleness. At its best it permitted him to go about freely in the world, as in his journeys to Colorado and Canada. At its worst, it rendered him almost helpless. Yet his good cheer and courage never failed him. Living in one of the simplest houses in an unpretentious district, rejoicing, as of old, in the life of the ferries and the streets, and in all the aspects of nature, cared for by devoted friends, who gave him, among other things, a horse and buggy of his own, honoured by the recognition of the masters in literature, as the letters from Tennyson alone are enough to show, writing in prose the *Specimen Days*, which Symonds called "the brightest and halest 'Diary of an Invalid' ever written," and singing in verse the

ripened songs of one who has seen and suffered much, Whitman lived his old age so as to blur in no wise the picture of his life, but to work its fulfilment.

After all has been said about Whitman, there are good folk who ask, "But is not the whole Whitman attitude a monstrous pose? Why should catalogues be considered poetry? Why must all things be thought equally worthy of honour? Are the graces of humility, reverence, and proportion obsolete, that they should be thrown to the winds? This Whitman brings us no new discoveries, or very few — but barbarous declamation of commonplace in plenty: why should we listen to him?"

It is quite possible that for many persons these honest questions cannot be satisfactorily answered. The Whitmaniacs, as the renegade admirer Swinburne called Whitman's followers, sometimes answer such inquiries with a heat which is meant to warm, but burns instead. It would be idle to tell all men that they must accept Whitman entire or not at all. He has been called "an acquired taste" — and surely he yields to those who turn to him something different from that which other poets give; yet he need not displace, but supplement them. The things which most open-minded readers who turn to Whitman can accept and rejoice in are his large enthusiasm for mankind, especially in "these States," whose national spirit he utters as

no one else has done; his elemental scorn, such as a cloud or a north wind might hold, for all but the real things; his faith and hope and love. With these watchwords he sets free the spirit which can respond to him, and accomplishes his definite purpose, of which he wrote: "The reader will have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought—there to pursue your own flight."

Persons of a casual temper read a page or two of Whitman, and, ignorant of the truth set forth by Stevenson, that "no one can appreciate Whitman's excellences until he has grown accustomed to his faults," find it easy to toss him aside as an offender against all preconceived ideas of poetry, and therefore not a poet. It would be less easy for these persons to explain the effect his writings have had upon men and women whom they do not so readily dismiss. It is not necessary to enumerate the names of all his earlier and later admirers, at home and abroad. It is, however, worth while to repeat the deliberate statement of John Addington Symonds, surely a critical voice worth heeding: "*Leaves of Grass*, which I first read at the age of twenty-five, influenced me more, perhaps, than any other book has done, except the Bible; more than Plato, more than Goethe." If this was a personal



TOMB AT HARLEIGH, CAMDEN, N. J.

Built under Whitman's supervision.

WHITTIER AND LOWELL

THE scholar in politics is familiar enough in other lands, but here he has never quite lost a certain strangeness of aspect. The poet in politics is almost an anomaly everywhere, and if any justification were needed for bringing together the names of Whittier and Lowell, it would be found in the fact that they won their first conspicuous laurels in devoting their Muse to the service of a political cause. This fact alone distinguishes them from their fellows in American letters.

When all the writers of the older generation were young men, the country was richer than it is now in "moral issues." The problems of national life provided every man with food for searching thought. Its themes were not essentially poetical, except in so far as human freedom and the freed spirit of poetry are at one. A freed spirit of opinion was indispensable to him who would espouse the cause to which Whittier and Lowell gave their young vigour, the cause of antislavery. All the forces of conservatism, North and South, were arrayed against it, and to array one's self unequivo-

cally on its side required a courage quite unneeded for partisanship in the political issues known to our day.

The question of slavery ceased so long ago to be a question at all, that it is well-nigh impossible for the younger generation to-day to acquire the point of view in which the opponents of the institution were once regarded very much as anarchists and social outlaws. It has been well said by Professor Wendell: "Perhaps the closest analogy which we can imagine to-day to the Abolitionists of 1833 would be a body of earnest, God-fearing men who should be convinced that God bade them cry out against the institution of marriage." Indeed, it may be doubted whether such a body of men would not be held in greater tolerance to-day, at least so far as their writings and their persons are concerned. As late as 1842 it was thus that Longfellow's slender pamphlet of *Poems on Slavery* was received by *Graham's Magazine*, then one of the leading literary periodicals of the country: the editor printed a guarded notice of it, and justified himself by writing to Longfellow that "the word *slavery* was never allowed to appear in a Philadelphia periodical, and the publisher objected to have even the name of the book appear in his pages." In person, moreover, the antislavery men were far less safe than on paper. In 1835 Whittier, in company with George Thompson, an English Abolitionist, was mobbed in Concord, New

Hampshire. For Thompson's ears three thousand dollars were offered in one place; in New Orleans a purse of twenty thousand dollars was publicly made up as a reward for his person. When he was to lecture in Boston a vessel was waiting to carry him to the South, if the following placard, posted all over the town, should result in his seizure: —

THOMPSON, THE ABOLITIONIST.

“That infamous foreign scoundrel, Thompson, will hold forth this afternoon at the Liberator Office, No. 48, Washington Street. The present is a fair opportunity for the friends of the Union to snake Thompson out. It will be a contest between the Abolitionists and the friends of the Union. A purse of *one hundred dollars* has been raised by a number of patriotic citizens to reward the individual who shall first lay violent hands on Thompson, so that he may be brought to the tar-kettle before dark. Friends of the Union, be vigilant!”

It would be easily possible to multiply illustrations of the sentiment which the opponents of slavery had to face, and even to show that the influences from which the strongest help might have been expected — the church, the press, and respectable private opinion — were the last to exert themselves in favour of the views which were finally to prevail. But it is needed here merely to indicate the strenuousness of the cause which brought Lowell and Whittier to stand for an im-

portant period of their lives upon common ground. Their approach to this ground and their departure from it were by utterly different routes, and the ultimate place they have attained is remote, in a greater and less degree, from that of partisans in any cause. Yet what they brought to the national problem, found in it, and carried away from it, might well form the basis for a comparative study of their lives. This account of them would exceed all bounds if it should attempt such a study. So abundant, indeed, are the records of the lives of these two men, that it is hardly fair to the reader to assume that the details need to be repeated with any minuteness. Perhaps he will prefer to be reminded of certain salient points, and to this end will not be unwilling to regard Whittier and Lowell at several separated periods of their careers.

The life of John Greenleaf Whittier was not lacking in picturesque moments. From those of his boyhood may be chosen one in the nineteenth year from his birth at Haverhill, Mass., on December 17th, 1807. On a summer day of 1826 he was mending a wall by the roadside with his father, when the postman, riding past, threw him a copy of the weekly *Free Press* of Newburyport. The boy opened it, and stood spellbound at the sight of some verses of his own in the "Poet's Corner." Without his knowledge they had been sent to the paper by his elder sister, who did not share her



stared speechless until his father impatiently bade him keep at his work, is not remote, for the editor of the *Free Press*, who soon sought out his young contributor, and urged the cultivation of his talents, was none other than his lifelong friend and fellow-worker, William Lloyd Garrison.

Twelve years after this first recognition of his promise Whittier was to be seen under strangely different circumstances. In May of 1838 a mob in Philadelphia attacked and burned "Pennsylvania Hall," a building erected, at the cost of more than forty thousand dollars, as the headquarters for work on behalf of civil liberty. Whittier at the time was the editor of an anti-slavery journal, the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, which had its office in the Hall. Knowing well that if he were seen in the crowd in his proper person he would suffer violence without attaining his purpose, he changed his ordinary Quaker aspect by putting on a wig and a long white overcoat, and, joining the mob which was sacking his office, saved as many of his papers as he could. The editors of antislavery papers were not all unused to seeing their presses shattered and their type thrown into the street or river. Whittier himself, in his own New England, had narrowly escaped tar and feathers. Mud, stones, sticks, and eggs of the age which qualifies them as missiles he had not escaped. But before joining his fortunes with those of antislavery he had deliberately counted the cost.

In later life he advised a boy, "if thou wouldst win success, join thyself to some unpopular, but noble cause." The giving of advice, however, is a different thing from courting the experience which prompts it, and what the embracing of an "unpopular, but noble cause" meant to Whittier was the strict limitation of high political ambitions. The varied editorial experiences, in Boston, Hartford, and Haverhill, which followed the short term of study after the discovery of his talents by Garrison, gave him good reason to think that he might excel either in politics or in literature. But in 1833 he wrote from Haverhill to Mrs. Sigourney in Hartford, "I have found that my political reputation is more influential than my poetical; so I try to make myself a man of the world — and the public are deceived, but *I* am not." So slender a store of health had the "toughening process" of Whittier's youth left for his manhood, that it could not have seemed possible for him at that time to attain distinction in both directions. The mere fact, however, that at the age of thirty he went to Philadelphia, where he remained till 1840, as the editor of the *Freeman*, indicates the regard in which he was held by his fellows in the agitation against slavery. Quaker that he was, he could never advocate war, yet with his own weapons he fought ferociously. To the zeal with which he plied one weapon, the great body of *Anti-Slavery Poems* in his collected

works bears witness. The weapon of shrewd, high-minded politics was no less effective in his hands. So pre-eminently do we regard him now as the poet that it is difficult to realise how telling were his labours, not only as a member of the Massachusetts General Court in 1835 and 1836, but as a quiet power, through a long succeeding period, in the political counsels of the parties in which he believed successively as competent to advance the interests to which his life was devoted. In the full record of his life, by Mr. S. T. Pickard, it is peculiarly interesting to learn how intimately the political fortunes of men so prominent as Caleb Cushing, Sumner, Frémont, and indirectly Lincoln, were affected by the opinions and actions of Whittier. As the disguised Quaker, accomplishing his own ends undetected of the angry crowd, Whittier presented in one evening a type of his life through many years. The phase of it thus recalled is not that which is best remembered, but to forget it is to forget a vital element of his completeness.

When Whittier gave up the editorship of the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, in 1840, he fell into the mode of life which remained practically unchanged for more than fifty years. In 1836 he had sold the Haverhill farm, and established himself with his mother and sister in the village of Amesbury. Hither he retired from Philadelphia in a broken condition of health, which rendered the remainder

of his life uniformly quiet. There were frequent periods in which he could not read or write for more than half an hour at a time. "I dread to touch a pen," he once wrote to a friend. "Whenever I do it increases the dull, wearing pain in my head, which I am scarcely ever free from." When he was but forty he could truly say, "I have already lived a long life, if thought and action constitute it. I have crowded into a few years what should have been given to many." It was not, however, for him "to rust unburnish'd," for the very circumstances which put an end to some of his activities quickened others. Indeed, the poet as now we know him best could hardly have been developed through a continuance of his early labours.

In the long life still to be lived there was no dearth of stimulus to the meditative, spiritual elements of his nature, and to the expression of all the gentler, intimate spirit of New England, of which his poems are peculiarly the voice. His domestic life was marked by singular simplicity and affection. The death of his mother, at the end of 1857, left him for nearly seven years in a devoted relationship with his sister Elizabeth, like himself unmarried, and not unlike the sisters of Lamb and Renan in the place she held in her brother's heart. When she died, in 1864, Whittier wrote, "The great motive of life seems lost;" but friends and kindred did not suffer him to want for affection and

care. Of his capability for friendships with men his *Personal Poems* speak with clearness, and many a one might have written as Bayard Taylor wrote to Fields when "The Tent on the Beach" appeared: "How pleasantly you and I will float down to posterity, each holding on to the strong swimmer, J. G. W.!" There are abundant memorials also of his friendships with women, especially Mrs. Child, Mrs. Fields, Lucy Larcom, Celia Thaxter, and Gail Hamilton, who cleverly wrought him in the war-time a pair of slippers typical of his bearing toward the conflict. The bellicose American eagle which adorned each foot held in its talons a cluster of thunderbolts, but the colour of his plumage was a Quaker drab. A joke was not easily lost on Whittier, for a Yankee gift and sense of humour came to him as directly as his other inheritances. The marks of appreciation and honour flowing from widely various sources in his later years more than offset the indignities to which the young antislavery agitator was subjected. He died on September 7th, 1892, at the house of a friend at Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, leaving Dr. Holmes as the sole survivor of the group of New Englanders who had done more than any other body of men for American letters. In the death of Whittier, a voice, clear to the last, truly and broadly representative both of his region and of his country, was hushed.

Even to suggest in a brief space all the achievements of a life of eighty-five industrious years is next to impossible. Still more foolhardy were the attempt to point out all the qualities of the work which remains as its monument. The best of it is too familiar to require comment. One could almost wish "Barbara Frietchie" and "Maud Muller" — like tunes that lose their charm from too much repetition — less familiar. But "Snowbound," — which many agree upon as Whittier's masterpiece, — "In School Days," "Ichabod," "My Psalm," and the dozen or dozens of other poems which other tastes will elect, could ill be spared from the pages of our literature; nay, the best of them could not be spared at all. When Whittier fails of his best, his artistic faults are not far to seek. Still farther from the beaten ways of books, however, are his sweetness and purity of spiritual sense, his faithfulness to simple and true standards of living, and his hatred of wrong, however strongly entrenched. In such qualities as these he and his work make their quiet claim to abiding remembrance.

James Russell Lowell indicated clearly the difference between himself and the class of men known primarily as reformers when he wrote to a friend: "Reform cannot take up the whole of me, and I am quite sure that eyes were given us to look about us with sometimes, and not always to be looking forward." Your complete reformer is generally a



WHITTIER AT 78.

From an engraving by J. A. J. Wilcox.

reading your book." Under such treatment he would doubtless have been with his fellows on Class Day. Both the earlier and the later incident point to the fact that Lowell's nature had a place for other qualities than the strenuousness of the mere reformer. So various, indeed, were his endowments that at different stages of his career he was to be seen in widely different lights.

In 1848, ten years after graduating from college, he published three pieces of writing which spoke for three distinct elements in the man as he already was, and foreshadowed what he was still more conspicuously to become. It was a broadly diversified expression of a single nature to bring forth in one year *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, *The Fable for Critics*, and the first series of *The Biglow Papers*, which had been appearing for about two years in periodicals. In the first of these three productions a poet spoke, in the second a wit who was also a penetrating critic of literature, in the third a wit, too, but at the same time a patriot, a scholar overflowing with recondite lore, and a shrewd interpreter of New England character. The ten years which had passed since Lowell's graduation had contributed to his development in all these directions. First of all, after he had tried manfully to devote himself to the law, it became clear to him and his friends that literature must be the vital concern of his life. In 1840 he had become engaged to Miss Maria White, who

was gifted not only with poetic talents, but with a nature of sensitive response to the spirit of reform that had begun to fill the air. The effect of this nature upon Lowell's was to quicken both the poet and the citizen in him. His first volume of poems appeared soon after his engagement, and his second before his marriage in 1844. In the intervening period the Abolitionists, of whom at nineteen he wrote that they "are the only ones with whom I sympathise of the present extant parties," had learned to recognise the value of his services as a writer, and the first winter of his married life was passed in Philadelphia, in an editorial connection with the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, which had drawn Whittier also from New England. In Cambridge again, Lowell began in 1846 a four years' service as a regular contributor to the *Anti-Slavery Standard* of New York, in which some of the first *Biglow Papers* originally appeared. Meanwhile, in his private capacity he was leading the life which permitted him to speak of himself in later years as "one of the last of the great readers," and a volume of *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets*, published in 1845, was the fruit of it. In addition to all this, the ripening experiences of personal joy and sorrow, and the feeling toward friends which always made him care more that they should esteem him highly than think well of what he wrote, had helped to form the writer of the three remarkable books of 1848.

It is little strange that such a man, not yet thirty years old, should feel within himself a sure, though unaggressive, confidence of achieving still greater things.

The Lowell at whom we look in 1858 goes by the dignified titles of Professor in Harvard College and Editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, then completing its first year of existence. A letter written by Longfellow, in 1855, says that Lowell "astonished the town last winter with a course of lectures on Poetry. Whereupon the college immediately laid hold of him and made him my successor." Lowell felt himself to be "not the stuff that professors are made of," believed that he would have been "a more poetical poet" if he had never become a professor, and called his college work "my annual dissatisfaction of lecturing." But it was an annual delight to the undergraduates, whose relations with him were frequently as human as they were academic. The outer world also owed much to the professorship, for it led him more than ever to the pursuit of congenial studies with a view to sharing with others his pleasure in them. It is doubtful, however, whether all the essays, which stand alike for his scholarship and his mastery of English style, would have come into being if he had not been also an editor, first of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and then, with Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, of the *North American Review*. In the pages of these periodicals many of

Lowell's prose writings first appeared, for those were days in which the editor of a magazine was expected to be one of its chief contributors. When the *Atlantic* was begun, who but Lowell could be its editor? The time was ripe for banding together the writers of New England in an enterprise which should not be merely "literary," but should bring the strongest literary forces of the country to bear upon the problem which had to be solved in the end by war. Lowell was eminently of the craft of writers, eminently a skilful judge of the writings of others, and eminently competent to use his own pen in the interest of Northern sentiments. With such a company of contributors as he had at his elbow, it was not difficult for the right man to give the magazine the place it took at once, but the contributors were hardly more essential to this than the right man, and that man was Lowell.

The decade between 1848 and 1858 wrought its greatest changes in Lowell's domestic surroundings, — changes which he was not unwilling to record in such verses as "After the Burial," written in 1850 upon the death of a daughter. In 1847 his first child had died, and in 1852, while he was travelling in Europe, partly in hope that Mrs. Lowell's broken strength and spirit might be restored, the loss of their only son befell them at Rome. From this grief Mrs. Lowell never recovered, and before the end of 1853, about a year after their return, she

died at Elmwood. When Lowell was appointed to the Harvard professorship, he made a second visit of a year to Europe, for the purpose of study. A year after his return in 1856, his second marriage—to Miss Frances Dunlap, who had been entrusted with the education of his one surviving daughter—took place, and the relationship which lasted through nearly thirty years of his life was begun. Dates and figures give but a bloodless record of affections so strong as Lowell's. Because they were also most tender, one does not wish to say more about them.

To know of Lowell in the war-time, it is needless to look beyond his poems. In "The Washers of the Shroud" he is seen at the beginning of the conflict, looking forward. The second series of the *Biglow Papers*, which he himself thought better than the first, carries us through its course, and into the troublous period that followed. The noble "Commemoration Ode" marks the ending of the war itself. Lowell could not bring himself to begin the ode until two days before it was to be read, when "something," as he said, "gave me a jog, and the whole thing came out of me with a rush." The memory of his nephews who had been killed, "three likely lads ez wal could be," burned within him, and the truth of Mr. Henry James's remark, that "the man and the author in him were singularly convertible," has no firmer support than in this instance of his attaining almost his highest poetical

expression when stirred in his deepest personal feelings.

It remains to look at Lowell in still another important aspect, that of Minister of the United States, under the administration of President Hayes, at the Court of St. James. Even regarding the shorter time of service at Madrid in the same capacity as a step of transition, the change from Cambridge to London was abrupt. But Lowell, through actual sojournings abroad almost as much as in his "fire-side travels," had long been a citizen of the world, and it was no surprise to those who knew him that the less cloistral life of London seemed hardly more foreign to him than Elmwood. "The true reward of an English style," Mr. James has characteristically said, "was to be sent to England." A young English poet, writing in prose not long ago, contrasted Emerson's philosophical mission, Hawthorne's mission of silence, and Dr. Holmes's mission of dining with Lowell's coming pre-eminently as "his Excellency the Ambassador of American Literature to the Court of Shakespeare." It is not impossible that Mr. Watson was unconsciously recalling and expanding the title which Thackeray gave to Washington Irving. Be that as it may, the fitness of Lowell for his post was instantly recognised in England, and his personal popularity won even the tribute of distrust from the loudest disciples of "Americanism" at home. How

sure he must have been that his English friends, who never could have enough of his after-dinner and "occasional" speaking, would not misunderstand him, may be inferred from his saying to the Master and Fellows of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, John Harvard's *alma mater*: "I must allow that, considering how long we have been divided from you, you speak English remarkably well." So far was Lowell from ceasing to be even aggressively an American, that Mr. G. W. Smalley, who reports this last remark, quotes the words of an English lady who said: "Hawthorne insulted us all by saying all English women are fat, but I dare not say in Mr. Lowell's presence that an American woman is thin." The truth is that Lowell constantly expressed his nationality in England as clearly as he had expressed it at home in such lines as "Jonathan to John," but with the difference which the different circumstances demanded. Dr. Holmes had written to him in 1876 to thank him not only for a volume of his essays, but also for showing "our young American scholars that they need not be provincial in their way of thought or scholarship because they happen to be born or bred in an outlying district of the great world of letters." It was but another evidence of the convertibility of man and author in Lowell that his public life set forth conspicuously a similar absence of all provincialism in the best product of

our civilisation. When any representative of a government brings both his own and a foreign people to a better understanding of their relations to each other, he does his country the service of a patriot. To this work, Lowell gave his riper powers, as he had given his younger zeal to the cause in which he thought he could best serve his native land.

When President Cleveland came into power, in 1885, it was inevitable that Lowell's place in London should be taken by another. He returned to America full of honours, but could not yet return to Elmwood, for his wife had died in London, and the old house, he thought, would be "full of ghosts." His winters, therefore, were divided between Boston and the "Deerfoot Farm" of his son-in-law at Southborough, Massachusetts, and the early and late summers between London and Whitby, on the Yorkshire coast. When his grandsons were to enter Harvard his daughter's family came to Elmwood to live, and Lowell came with them. There he died on August 12th, 1891.

The quality in Lowell which Mr. Leslie Stephen has defined as "his ineradicable boyishness" kept him at heart very much the same person from the beginning to the end of his life of seventy-two years. It helped him always to make light of unessential troubles. Soon after he was first married, Mrs.

Lowell wrote to Mrs. Hawthorne, "I begin to fear we shall not have the satisfaction of being so *very* poor, after all." At times her fears were not realised, but they were the times when Lowell, in letters to his friends, could give the most amusing accounts of his condition. Once when he was in Europe he told his bankers to let him know when his money was spent, for then he meant to go home. He had no accounts of his own to tell him, and an error in the banker's accounts brought his visit prematurely to an end. But in later years the bankers made good his disappointment by a profitable investment of the sum which really had remained to his credit, and Lowell made the incident a text for a humourous denunciation of all accounts and figures. Humourous and enthusiastic, companionable and sympathetic, he was the best of friends, and the life of congenial assemblies. From London he wrote to Mr. Norton, "I have never seen society, on the whole, so good as I used to meet at our Saturday Club." What wit and spirit he brought to its meetings the testimony of others informs us. What memories he was capable of carrying away with him, one may find recorded in his Elegy on Agassiz, in which it is as easy to find the lines relating to Emerson, Hawthorne and others as if their names were given. Here, indeed, as everywhere in his writings, Lowell himself stands revealed. His authoritative Life remains to be

written, but when it is done it will be almost — as so brief a paper as this must be altogether — a superfluous piece of reading for one who has made the direct acquaintance of Lowell through his poems, his essays, and his letters.

The contrast between the lives of Whittier and Lowell prepares one for precisely the contrasts that may be drawn between the work of the one and the other, both in quality and in scope. The differences are obvious, but beneath them all, like the family likeness of brothers whose features are widely unlike, the resemblance they bear to each other is that of true sons of older New England, and they show themselves at times to be close of kin. Their most striking outward resemblance lay in their attitude in early life toward the cause of antislavery. To see two men for whom the later years held such different things in store joined at any time in a common warfare helps us truly to realise the vitality of the uniting cause. The change in the attitude of a whole nation towards a cause which has ceased to exist, except as history, may not unfitly be likened to the change that sometimes comes to a fleet of boats lying quietly at sundown in a crowded harbour, and heading all in one direction. In the night a sharp wind comes out of a new quarter, and there is a great confusion of swinging vessels; but in the morning the fleet is seen pointing as peacefully in a new direction as if nothing had happened.

The difference in the change of a national attitude is that the lives and the writings of such men as Lowell and Whittier help us to recall the turmoil of the night as something more than a sleepy remembrance.

LONGFELLOW AND HOLMES

FEW of us know at first hand the music of shepherds, sailors, and gipsies ; yet certain strains and cadences unfailingly bring the images of these persons before the mind, even without the visual aid which opera provides. The notes by which we recognise them have become a part of musical tradition. So have the personalities of Longfellow and Holmes, to say nothing of the notes of their music, become virtually traditional. Their habits of thought and expression entered long ago into the common stock of accepted knowledge. It has been said by Mr. Andrew Lang of Longfellow, and the words may be applied with hardly less of accuracy to Dr. Holmes, that his "qualities are so mixed with what the reader brings, with so many kindest associations of memory, that one cannot easily criticise him in cold blood." If such a proceeding is difficult, there is the double difficulty, in dealing with the personal records of the two writers, that their lives are at once singularly well known and singularly uneventful. It is almost like reciting

certain of their own most familiar lines to relate anew the incidents of their careers. The knowledge of them must be well-nigh universal, so that the narrator can do little more than to refrain, if possible, from such traditional phrases as "the genial autocrat" and "the beloved poet of Cambridge," and content himself with saying again what many of his readers must know already.

The contrast between the volumes containing the complete works of Longfellow and of Holmes is strong enough to speak for the contrast between their native endowments. Indeed, there would be scanty reason for placing their names side by side were it not that the backgrounds of their lives present resemblances many and marked. In modern American life there can hardly be a social unit so definite and distinct as that which stood for "society" in Boston in the days when Longfellow and Holmes were in their long-continued prime. Their background, to a striking degree, was the background of this social unit, their Boston, of course, being that which stretches toward Cambridge and Harvard College, rather than toward State Street and the wharves. If for stricter accuracy it must be said that for Longfellow it was Cambridge, on the contrary, that stretched itself toward Boston, it is necessary only to remember that the best intellectual and social interests of the two places were one. It was not for the persons identified most

future may be inferred from the encouragement given him by the editors of the day to send them his productions in prose and verse. Still more encouraging to him must have been the proffer, immediately upon his graduation, of the newly established Professorship of Modern Languages at Bowdoin College, with the opportunity of studying in Europe before his duties should begin.

In yet another of his college letters to his father Longfellow declared: "I have resolutely determined to enjoy myself heartily wherever I am. I find it most profitable to form such plans as are least liable to failure." These statements might almost be taken from a *credo* of optimism. They were the words of a boy, but of the very boy who became the Longfellow of later years. In the letters which he wrote from Europe, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two, the connecting links between the boy and the man are clearly apparent. A shrewdness of observation, a kindliness of humour hardly consistent with its utmost keenness, and a thorough good feeling for those about him and at home are constantly manifested. What strikes one, perhaps even more forcibly, is the fact that this boy from a quiet New England town and college was so excellently well qualified to travel. His mind was already well enough trained to tell his eye what it needed most to see, and his serious study of the literatures of France, Spain, Italy and Germany, car-

were fruits of American life which one would be only too glad to see still ripening in any quarter of the land. That this fruitage should take two such different forms as those presented by the work of Longfellow and of Holmes is not the least significant point in placing them together against their common background.

It was not until the year 1836, when Longfellow was but little short of thirty years old, that he found himself before this background. He had ancestral rights to being there. His father and great-grandfather were graduates of Harvard College, and through his mother's family his descent from John Alden and Priscilla Mullins was as direct as Bryant's. But the Boston and Cambridge surroundings were not those of his earlier years. He was born on February 27, 1807, in Portland, Maine, where his father was a distinguished lawyer, and in 1825, with Hawthorne for a classmate, he was graduated from Bowdoin College. During his college years the tendency toward books and verse-making, which had begun early in his well-conditioned boyhood, was clearly enough marked to reveal unmistakable signs of his future both to himself and to his elders. "The fact is," he wrote to his father before his graduation, "I most eagerly aspire after future eminence in literature; my whole soul burns most ardently for it, and every earthly thought centres in it." That his elders were not without hopes of this



LONGFELLOW AT 47.

From an engraving of a crayon portrait by Lawrence.

ried on for three years in their own countries, rendered this mind indeed a well-tempered instrument for the work it had to do when he returned to Bowdoin College in 1829.

Early in 1829 he had written from Göttingen to one of his sisters, "My poetic career is finished," and for some years nobody would have questioned the truth of the statement. Except for the poetical translation of *Coplas de Manrique*, the writings of the five years of his Bowdoin professorship were in prose—magazine articles, text-books of French, Spanish, and Italian, and the sketches of travel brought together in 1835 in the two volumes of *Outre-Mer*. The kinship of this first original production of his with Irving's *Sketch-Book* is almost invariably pointed out; and when this is done, it is worth while to remind one's self that Longfellow, in his later years, is reported to have spoken of the *Sketch-Book* as the first book that fascinated his boyish imagination. It was less as a poet, then, than as a scholar and a writer of good prose that he was asked in 1834, to undertake the Professorship of Modern Languages at Harvard, in which his predecessor was George Ticknor, and his successor Lowell. There was again an opportunity to go abroad for further study, and he eagerly accepted it. With him went his wife (Mary Storer Potter), whom he had married in Portland in 1831. In Sweden and Denmark and Germany he applied himself to

udy as in his earlier days. Before the end of 1835 the first great sorrow of his life came to him in the death of his wife at Rotterdam. In the Paul Fleming of *Hyperion*, published four years later, the Longfellow of this heavy-hearted time revealed himself with tolerable clearness. We need but compare the book with his journal and letters to see how much of real life was reproduced in the form of fiction. Even at the time it must have been a palpably open secret that the heroine of the story was the heroine of the real and longer romance of Longfellow's second marriage. It was not only through study, therefore, but also through vital experience that Longfellow's second sojourn abroad had its mellowing effect upon him, both as a professor and as a poet. At the end of 1836 he established himself in Cambridge. "This was no broken-winded minister," as Dr. Hale has said, "who had been made professor;" and Longfellow and the place in which he found himself seemed from that time forth alienably fitted to each other.

This very year of 1836 was marked by the appearance of Dr. Holmes's first volume of *Poems*; but to the surroundings into which Longfellow was just coming, Dr. Holmes, like another St. Paul, as born free. It gave him evident pleasure to relate how his entry into the world at Cambridge, Massachusetts, was marked by the simple record in his father's almanac of *son b.* against the date August

29th, 1809. As one who declared his preference politically for equality, but socially for *the* quality, it must have given him constant satisfaction to reflect upon his ancestry, for it was about as good as any which New England could afford, and gave him an unquestioned place in the caste well named by himself, Brahmin. His early training at home, at Andover, and at Harvard College, where he was graduated in the year which his verses for the "Class of '29" rendered famous, differed from that of his contemporaries born to circumstances like his own, mainly in its larger infusion of Calvinism. He began early to rebel against the doctrines which his orthodox father, the Rev. Abiel Holmes, would have had him accept, and never quite ceased to resent the attempt to force them upon him. Evidently he was not to follow in his father's professional footsteps. For a year he attempted the study of the law, as Lowell did later; but the best thing he achieved during that time was the impetuous writing of "Old Ironsides," which carried his name up and down through the country. A college periodical, as he said half a century later, also tempted him into print, and infected him with that pervasive form of lead-poisoning "which reaches the young author through mental contact with type-metal." Of his two mistresses, the muse and medical science, it was thus the muse to whom he gave his first allegiance. But medicine was soon to be

come his serious occupation, and for three years — one at home and two in Paris — he applied himself diligently to professional study. At the beginning of 1836 he was ready to hang out his sign in Boston, but his medical success was to lie in the work of a writer and lecturer rather than of a practitioner. As his biographer, Mr. John T. Morse, Jr., has admirably put it: "When he said that the smallest fevers were thankfully received, the people who had no fevers laughed, but the people who had them preferred some one who would take the matter more seriously than they thought this lively young joker was likely to do." Mr. Morse has also pointed out the fact that his publishing a volume of poems in the very year of his beginning to practise was, professionally, reckless. If the book, however, had contained nothing worth reading except "The Last Leaf" and "Old Ironsides," it would have marked the arrival of a new and distinct figure in American letters.

Here, then, were Longfellow and Holmes, in the year 1836 beginning their respective careers as a Harvard professor and as a Boston physician and writer of verses. Each was to become much more in the years that followed, but for Holmes there was to be a long period of comparatively limited fame. Mr. Leslie Stephen has said of him, "Few popular authors have had a narrower escape from obscurity," and the remark is full of truth. It surely might be

held as one of the genuine *Ifs* of literary history that if the *Atlantic Monthly* had not come into being in 1857, with Lowell as its chief editor, insisting as

*I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here.
But the old three-cornered hat
And the breeches, and all that
Are so queer!
And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the Spring,
Let them smile as I do now
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes.

AUTOGRAPH LINES FROM DR. HOLMES'S POEM "THE LAST LEAF."

"a condition precedent" that Dr. Holmes should be his foremost contributor, the "Breakfast-Table" series of books, and Dr. Holmes's novels, which also first saw the light in the *Atlantic*, would have

stood an excellent chance of remaining unwritten. To see the possible author of these books in the Holmes of the twenty-one years between 1836 and 1857 required a shrewd vision. Many admirable realities were visible to eyes less keen than Lowell's. Not only as a writer of medical essays, but still more as a professor of anatomy, first for two years at Dartmouth College, and then for the better part of a lifetime in the Medical School of Harvard University, where he said he occupied not a chair, but a whole settee, he did the things necessary to attain a good name as a scientist. His lectures on the English poets, and other literary themes, in Boston and the New England towns where the lyceum system flourished added something to the reputation as a man of letters which he was making for himself by the publication of successive volumes of verse. But through all this time it was within his own circle that his gifts were most fully appreciated. His marriage, in 1840, to Miss Amelia Lee Jackson had made this native circle doubly his own. If it was provincial, none realised the fact better than he. "We all carry the Common in our heads as the unit of space," he once wrote to Motley, "the State House as the standard of architecture, and measure off men in Edward Everetts as with a yardstick;" and less consciously he bears witness to his nativity by writing of his health, "I am nicely." But he was intensely proud of his Boston, and was

yet to show by the literary uses to which he put it how the local might be extended into the universal. For himself, he declared in later life that he would rest upon having said, "Boston is the hub of the universe." And this Boston which he knew came to know him well as a delightful wit and talker, a curious student of himself — so frank that he could write, "I have always considered my face a convenience rather than an ornament" — a shrewd observer of men, and the local laureate of civic, social, and academic "occasions." Nothing that he has left shows more clearly than the "Poems of the Class of '29" the strength of his social instinct and the nature of his social gift. Add to the printed lines the knowledge that he frequently sang instead of reading these verses at the class meetings, to which he brought them without a break for thirty-eight years, and the man and the lyric tendency of his muse both stand forth with a certain clearness. It is equally easy to see, however, that if the light in Dr. Holmes's hand had continued to show itself exclusively to those who for a long time were its only witnesses, his escape from obscurity would not have been narrow, but impossible.

When 1857 came to Longfellow, it found his fame far beyond the need of such help as might come to it through the medium of a new magazine. From 1839, when *Hyperion* and his first volume of poems, *Voices of the Night*, appeared, he had gone

on year by year bringing out the poems, short and long, that carried his name and the love for the books which bore it through most of the world. It is needless to recite the list of these works, for they are still household words. As early as 1847 came *Evangeline*, raising among the critics the interminable question of the possibility of English hexameters, a question which the unnumbered thousands did not take time to answer, except by buying the book and reading it with delight. Hawthorne had provided him with the story, and when the book won its immediate recognition, Longfellow modestly wrote to him: "This success I owe entirely to you, for being willing to forego the pleasure of writing a prose tale which many people would have taken for poetry, that I might write a poem which many people take for prose." In 1855 *Hiawatha*, which may not unfairly be considered as Longfellow's most individual production, took its separate place in American literature. From time to time, throughout the entire period ending with 1857, a great number of the shorter poems by which Longfellow is best known made their appearance. For him the chief effect of the establishment of the *Atlantic Monthly* was external, in that it provided, virtually at his door, a medium for almost anything he might write.

It has become a truism to say that the serenity of Longfellow's poetry was merely a reflection from

The night is come, but not too soon,

And sinking silently,

All silently, the little moon

Drops down behind the sky.

Henry W. Longfellow

Oct. 20. 1877.

AUTOGRAPH STANZA FROM LONGFELLOW'S POEM, "THE LIGHT OF STARS."

his own life. It is no less a threadbare story to tell of the young professor's applying to Madam Craigie for rooms in the house which had been Washington's headquarters at Cambridge, and of her informing him that she could take no more students as lodgers. But her lodger he became, and in 1843, when he married Miss Frances E. Appleton, of Boston, her father bought the Craigie house and gave it to the young professor and his wife. The daily life encompassed by its walls is set forth with sufficient detail in Longfellow's published journals. It was a scholarly, placid life, filled with domestic content, varied within its own limits by constant, gracious hospitality and by journeyings in the summer, for many years no farther than to Nahant. There were few occasions for rebelling against circumstances in such a life as Longfellow's, and the notes of complaint in the journals are rare. Illness, troublesome eyesight, the inroads of impertinent admirers and seekers after autographs and advice, whom he treated with patient, tender consideration — these sometimes gave him fair occasion for protest. But most of all were his college duties irksome — "the working in the crypts of life, the underground labour," as he defined his teaching. The longing for greater freedom for literary production was gratified in 1855, when he gave up his professorship. Through all the ensuing period, in which Dr. Holmes began to win his universal fame,

Longfellow, already a firmly established "figure," was merely fixing more securely the fame he had won. "I do not see why a successful book" says one of the characters in *Hyperion*, "is not as great an event as a successful campaign." For the remainder of Longfellow's life the events were generally of this character.

The tragic exception from the smoothness of these years was the death of Mrs. Longfellow in the summer of 1861. Her dress took fire from a match on the floor, and the next day she died from the shock of the burning. Longfellow, some weeks later, defined himself as "outwardly calm, but inwardly bleeding to death." What the loss of his wife was to him we know best from the fact that the only reference to it in his writings is found in the sonnet, "The Cross of Snow," written eighteen years after her death, and kept from the world until after his own. As Bryant undertook the translation of Homer, so Longfellow in his sorrow turned to Dante. The evenings devoted to the criticism of this work by Lowell, Mr. Norton, and other friends whose opinion was worth getting, showed Longfellow at his best, in the midst of friends. His letters, throughout his life, tell us how much his friendships were to him, even from the almost boyish days, when Charles Sumner, George W. Greene, and Samuel Ward first took their important places in his life. It is not without a certain signifi-

cance to find Mr. Howells saying that "he was Longfellow to friends who were James and Charles and Wendell to one another." For somewhat the same reason, perhaps, it is easier for everybody to speak of him merely as "Longfellow," than it is to drop the "Dr." from before the name of Holmes. The contrast between the men in the relations of friendship is brought clearly to mind by comparing the quality and frequency of Dr. Holmes's class poems with Longfellow's single production of the kind, his "Morituri Salutamus," written fifty years after graduation. "Just before leaving for our respective homes," writes one of those who heard him read it, "we gathered in a retired college-room for the last time, talked together a half hour as of old, agreed to exchange photographs, and prayed together." The seriousness of this picture undoubtedly had its counterpart in some of the later meetings of Dr. Holmes's class; but it would be impossible to imagine Longfellow as the singer of the earlier rollicking verses of Holmes. What the one said of the other is this: "I find Longfellow peculiarly sweet in disposition, gentle, soothing to be with, not commonly brilliant in conversation, but at times very agreeable, and saying excellent things with a singular modesty." In another place he is described by the same hand as "luminous with gentle graces as always." Such expressions as these help one to understand why the word "benignant" has so often

been applied to him. In the personal quality of the man there must have been much of the temper which prompted him to write of Poe: "The harshness of his criticisms I have never attributed to anything but the irritation of a sensitive nature chafed by some indefinite sense of wrong." And many years later he wrote in his journal, as if in gentle protest: "Poets who cannot write long poems think that no long poems should be written." In Poe's passionate charge of plagiarism there undoubtedly was as much truth as Mr. Stedman expresses in calling Longfellow "a good borrower," and as any one may see by looking at the obvious connection between what Longfellow read and what he wrote. But there was never any attempt to conceal this obviousness, any more than there was to refrain from entering in his journal from year to year the same reflection prompted by the date of October 1st. The obviousness of another sort which characterises much of his work may well be mentioned in the same breath with Mr. Stedman's just remark about the fashion of slighting him "for the very qualities which had made him beloved and famous," and with his own saying that authors, of all men, must come at the right time. Longfellow surely did this, and if later singers are not permitted to deal so freely in the obvious, may it not be in part because his unerring craftsmanship has imposed upon them the need of doing simple things extremely well if they are to

be done at all? So many gifts, not of craftsmanship only, were his, and such was the spell of his personal presence, that Mr. Howells could truly write of a chance meeting with him in a Cambridge street, "You felt that the encounter made you a part of literary history." This feeling rendered it impossible for his contemporaries and their immediate successors to give him his true place. Whether he is held above it to-day, or has sunk below it, can hardly be told with complete certainty, for the Longfellow tradition is still potent to attract some minds and to repel others. At the time of his death, on March 24th, 1882, there were few voices of dissent from the opinion that the clearest and best-beloved light of American letters was extinguished. "Let 'em put in all their *ifs* and *buts*," wrote Lowell once; "I don't wonder the public are hungrier and thirstier for his verse than for that of all the rest of us put together."

The year of Longfellow's death was the very year in which Dr. Holmes gave up his medical professorship, and became more than ever such a "figure" as Longfellow had been. Fame had come to him with extraordinary swiftness as soon as the "Autocrat" papers, begun in the first number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1857, were known to be his. It would be so strange at this day to think of ascribing their manner and method to anybody else, that one is amused to find in the December,

1857, number of the *Knickerbocker Magazine* the statement: "If John Sanderson, author of 'The American in Paris,' were alive, we should unhesitatingly attribute 'The Autocrat at the Breakfast Table' to his facile pen." The open secret in Boston that Dr. Holmes was its author soon became open everywhere; and particularly when the second series, "The Professor at the Breakfast Table," dealing somewhat more freely with religious beliefs, began to appear, the name of Holmes associated itself in many minds with everything that was dangerous and iconoclastic. The mildness to modern ears of many of the passages that seemed most shocking forty years ago is more eloquent than any words could be about that general tempering of rigorous beliefs in which Dr. Holmes was undoubtedly one of the strongest influences. As his habit of mind in this regard extended itself to others, so did his more personal habits of thought and phrase — shrewd, whimsical, and kindly — become year by year more familiar. In verse, in fiction, not wholly clear of the charge of being "medicated," in the memoirs of his friends, Motley and Emerson, in the volume written to acknowledge the overpowering attentions that filled his hundred days of 1886 in Europe, and in later returns to what Mr. Howells has excellently called "the form of dramatised essay which he invented in the Autocrat" — in all these writings the personal Dr.

Holmes is eminently present, "a Boswell writing out himself." It is no wonder that the regard in which Lowell and his own circle had long held him in Boston spread, almost without modification, to an entire world of readers.

Dr. Holmes died on October 7th, 1894. Of all the company of men who laid the scene of so much of our literary history within and near Boston, it was for him to walk farthest with the new generation. But with his death a period which had virtually ended some years before was brought to an outward close. The work of what came as nearly as anything we have had to being a "school" of writers was definitely completed. What variety within its general uniformity was possible, the two names of Longfellow and Holmes abundantly suggest. Yet diverse as they were, it is well worth while to think of them together as representatives in literature of all the good things that come of the best birth and breeding, and of the scholarly high-mindedness which should be implied by those terms. "There is a little plant called *Reverence* in the corner of my Soul's garden, which I love to have watered about once a week;" so Dr. Holmes once said of his church-going habits. Not only would Longfellow have spoken a hearty Amen to these words, but their meaning for both might be so extended as to include the general attitude of men who are conservatives at heart. Such they both

were in spite of occasional demonstrations to the contrary. To aid in the foundation of a national literature which should stand entirely apart from our inheritance of letters was obviously not the work for which such men were made. What they received from their past and reflected from their present may not have been largely typical of the thing we call "Americanism," but they both transmitted faithfully what came to them, and apart from all the delight they communicated to others by this process, the background they cannot help revealing is one which the best Americans will do well to remember and revere.

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